COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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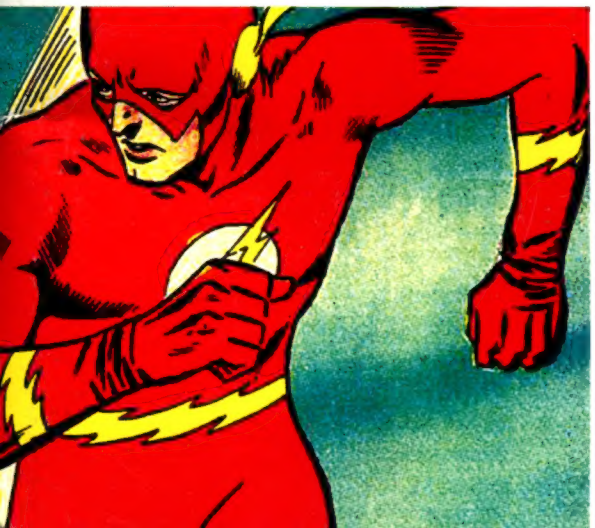

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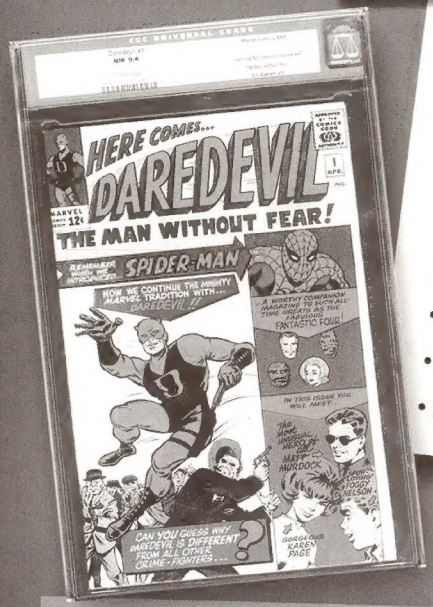

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A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

Vol. 3 No. 117

November 2004

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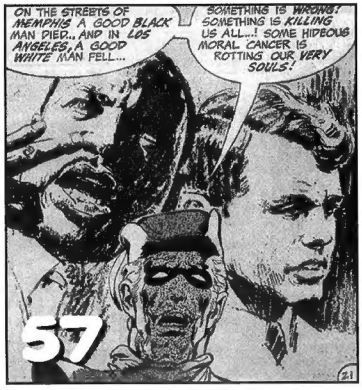
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SOMETHING IS WRONG! SOMETHING IS KILLING US ALL...! SOME HIDEOUS MORAL CANCER IS ROTTING OUR VERY SOULS!
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COVER:
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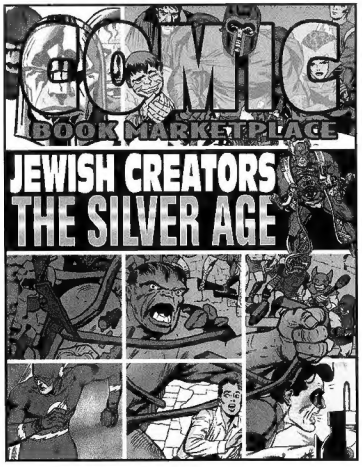

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The Evolution of a Collector

You know that all of us collector-types have a mental condition known as OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder). You *do* know that, right? It comes with the territory. Some of us have it to a greater degree than others, and the good news is that there's a cure for it. The bad news is that the cure is called *death.* And so, considering the alternative, most of us have to learn to live with it.

I think it starts when we are very young, and we have our hidden cigar box or our special drawer where we keep all our goodies. I had mine, and both of my brothers had theirs, and it was considered *verboten* to prowl around and paw through your brother's private drawer. I had a favorite leather holster for my cap pistols, a present from my grandma Polly, and I still have it. I had a collection of shoulder patches from WW2 army uniforms, and a Nazi belt buckle which my cousin Mearle got in the War. I had some special marbles. And, of course, I had my comic books. I was one of those kids who would smuggle a flashlight to bed so I could read comics under the covers late at night.

When hormones, cars and girls entered the picture, my OCD changed direction. There are many positive aspects to OCD, like my obsession with making good grades in school and "doing better than the others." A story that my family likes to tell about me comes from when I was in the first grade and brought my first report card home for my parents to see. There was a space on the card for teacher's comments, and in that space was printed, in typical first-grade scrawl, the comment "Russell is doing better than the others." I don't remember if I thought I could get away with that or not, but I didn't. It was obvious that Miss Brooks had not written that comment to my parents, and just as obvious that I must have had a drive to prove myself worthy to my parents.

So, all through high school and on into college, I continued to do "better than the others." I was at the top of all my classes, all the way through my Ph.D. degree in Physics, and because of my good grades my first job was as Chairman of the Physics Department at Drake University in Des Moines. But don't think I am bragging, because here is the funny part. I didn't really like physics that much. I just happened to be good at it, good enough to do "better than the others," but I had no real passion for it, and after ten years of teaching physics I started looking around for greener pastures.

One of the fringe benefits of being a professor at Drake was getting to take a free trip to New York City each year, usually in February, for the national meeting of university physics teachers. I went, and that's when I met Bill Gaines for the first time. It was 1965, my beloved ECs had been dead and rotting in the grave for ten years, and *Mad* magazine was very popular and successful. I wrote to Bill, he asked me out to dinner, and Chapter Two of my life started to unfold.

[*to be continued*]

Russ Cochran
Editor & Publisher

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A classicist

Much of *CBM* #114 focuses on the past, present and future of horror comics. As a Warren fan I enjoyed columnist Pat Calhoun's nostalgic nod to the "*Creepy* Classics" of the 1960s. These were wonderful comic adaptations of genuinely classic tales by such stalwart scribes as Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Bram Stoker and Robert Louis Stevenson. Creepy classics indeed!

I also enjoyed Bill Baker's interview with J. Michael Straczynski. I have been a fan of Straczynski's work since his days on the syndicated *Twilight Zone* series of 1988. JMS reached new heights of success in the TV industry with the creation of his landmark *Babylon 5* series. More recently he has assumed the role of writer on the *Amazing Spider-Man* title, much to Marvel's delight I am sure. On a personal note, I was surprised to learn that Straczynski's initial encounter with comics occurred here in Oklahoma, courtesy of some kindly gas station jockey. Those "middle-of-the-road" funnybooks led to Silver Age DC and Marvel comics, which led to the fictional wonders of Bradbury, Matheson, Sturgeon and others. It is a journey many of us can identify with because ours were so similar. Except of course the rest of us didn't end up creating a successful science fiction television series or writing the *Amazing Spider-Man*! Thanks for the interview with a notable creator. Best wishes.

Timothy M. Walters
Muskogee, OK

It is always good to hear from an Okie from Muskogee, where comic fans can have a ball! Some of my best memories of the comic conventions of the 1970s are from Oklahoma City with guys like Robert Brown, Don Maris, Bart Bush, those two big Harper brothers, and that slick old Okie politician Eric Groves!

RC

We love him MADly

Thank you for the copies of *CBM* #115, which I've just received and eagerly read. And thank you for John's and your kind words about my "auteurism" (whatever the heck that is!).

Whenever you are ready to do a full-blown interview or article about me—like the Kurtzman, Barks and Eisner articles in #115—I will be more than happy to cooperate.

Incidentally, you made a glaring error in the "Kurtzman The Auteur" article when you attributed *MAD* #29 to Harvey as his final issue of *MAD*. Harvey's final issue (the one he walked out on after demanding 51% control of *MAD*, forcing Bill to fire him!) was the "Spring" issue, #28...which *I* finished assembling and sent down to the presses without taking any credit for its closure because it was all Kurtzman-edited material. I saw to it that Harvey was credited as Editor on the Index Page.

Number 29 was *my* first edited issue of *MAD*! I wrote and designed the cover, which was constrained by Bill's usual cautious and penurious approach to new ventures, limiting my first cover to *two colors*. I wrote almost all of the issue, save for a limited number of Harvey left-over articles...and I took my first "Editor" credit on the Index page.

Anyway...thank you for putting me on the cover of *CBM* #115 with the three other comic book "Greats." I was honored to be among them. MAD-ly yours,

Al Feldstein
Via e-mail

And CBM *is honored, Al, just having your input. We stand corrected on the matter of the editorship of* Mad *#29. If anyone knows about this for sure, it'd have to be you! Since we are now working on publication of the Complete EC PictoFiction mags, we will be talking to Al about these soon. Hey, gang! When you've got people like Al Feldstein, Will Eisner and Paul Levitz (just to drop a few names) reading your magazine, you must be doing something right, right?*

RC

Mutual admiration

What a great issue #115 is! Especially the John Stanley stuff—I was asked by his son James to accept the Eisner Hall Of Fame induction award of Mister Stanley at this year's San Diego Con, which I humbly did, on behalf of the Stanley family. I

also adapted his classic "Monster of Dread End" story (from Dell's *Ghost Stories* #1) in my "digi-metti" style. The story saw print in the great new British Horror Comics 'Zine *From the Tomb* #12. Yours as always,

Pete von Sholly
Sunland, CA

Hey, Pete! I have seen some of your new artwork based on John Stanley characters, and I like it! Keep on keepin' on!

RC

A listening "post"

Do you mind explaining to me what happens to your articles? I've been waiting and waiting for your promised article on DC villains part 2—the Silver Age and for years before that the article on the Flash villains. Where on earth are they? I can understand some delay, but this is ridiculous. Apart from that, are you going to devote an issue to specific characters, e.g. The Flash? If not, why not? Much as I like your mag, I would love to see something along those lines (not featuring Superman/Batman/Wonder Woman/Captain Marvel/Spider-Man/Hulk/X-Men/Cap etc.—there are other popular heroes to discuss and inform on—just as there are other artists besides Kirby/Neal Adams/Ditko etc., if you get my meaning. I've read 100 lifelines of these characters and people—for God's sake, let's hear from the second tier and the third tier.

I'm pleased you've returned to quality printing especially on the cover repros, although I would like to see repros of artwork without lettering whenever possible—it's amazing the difference it makes.

Finally, please bring forth the DC villain issue including a major article on The Flash's Rogues gallery please, then I can send you a well done letter.

P.S. Any chance on coming out when you're advertised to—or not advertising until you are back on track?

Best of luck—thanks for listening(?).

Duncan Goodyer
via e-mail

Huh? Well, to answer your question, here's exactly what happens to our articles. They get cut. They get continued or postponed. You may have noticed that CBM *always contains exactly 80 pages, and now 32 of those are in eye-popping full color! We have to solicit orders for these issues months in advance, so we take an educated guess at the contents of each issue long before we actually get down to the business of putting that issue together. Often, after receiving the articles and illustrations from our contributors, we find that we don't have room for everything. Duh! (I think that's the first time I have ever typed that word! See, I can keep up with the times!) Next, we* do *sometimes devote a whole issue to a single character. Check out our back issues ad in this issue for a list of these. And yes, we are also interested in what you call second-tier and third-tier artists, and have many features on them. Where you been, bwah? Finally, I hope you have noticed that we* are *back "on track"—for the past year or so we have been hitting our deadlines of producing one new issue every month. You close your letter by saying "thanks for listening(?)". You're welcome. And we* do *listen. As editor, I personally read each and every letter we receive and I do need and solicit your continuing input about* CBM.

RC

Terror firmer

Hello, my name is Matthew Kirscht and I have been a long time collector and recent historian of Bronze Age horror comics. I run a website dedicated specifically to them, **shiverbones.com**. I am glad to see this wonderful era of comics getting some press and I think Dan Johnson wrote a good article to help introduce many to these gems. The only thing I feel I need to clear up is a common misconception that DC comics got tamer and more "quaint" as time went on. The truth of the matter is they got far more gruesome! Severed heads, eye injuries, acid in the face, hanging, hearts out, impaling, electrocutions and dismemberment actually increased starting in 1974. Writers like Michael Fleisher and Jack Oleck started to put really twisted situations back in to the stories. Check out *House of Mystery* #260 (Sep 1978) to see a panel of a child holding up his fathers severed head, or *Unexpected* #189 (Feb 1979) to see a Ditko-drawn acid in the face sequence. I think as more people start to look at the later DC horror issues, they will be shocked to see so many examples of pre-Code horror style violence. Sincerely,

Matthew Kirscht
via e-mail

As you might know, Jack Oleck wrote a lot of the later EC horror stories, when Al Feldstein started soliciting outside writers, around 1953-55 or so. So with that kind of background, it's no wonder that Oleck gravitated toward the gruesome kind of story lines that you mention! After all, what's a good horror comic without a little bit of dismemberment, impaling and head-severing? Guess what? That's what makes it a horror comic*!*

RC

The limpid pool

The Halloween issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* was a winner. With stories about horror comics from Dark Horse, Warren, DC and Marvel, plus cover art from those publishers and

others, you covered the whole range of great horror comics—almost.

Claypool Comics has been publishing horror from our first issues more than a decade ago. Three of our titles—the mini-series *Phantom of Fear City*, Peter David's *Soulsearchers and Company* and the vampire saga *Deadbeats*—form the "Fear City" trilogy; that is, they all take place against the same backdrop, the town formally named Mystic Grove but nicknamed Fear City.

A special note: *Deadbeats*, by Richard Howell and Ricardo Villagran, has been continuously published for longer than any other current horror book. In fact, it may be the longest-running horror title with continuing characters (as opposed to anthology books) in the history of comics.

I know that *CBM*'s space is limited and that you couldn't include every prominent horror book in one issue; but let's at least raise a cheer (or a scream of terror) for Richard, Ricardo, and their pet bloodsuckers. All best,

David Seidman
Claypool Comics
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David, the truth is, we don't get out much! Here in this small town of West Plains, Missouri, we have no comic shops! So you gotta send us some of this Claypool stuff so we can taste it for ourselves! Seriously, all of our articles and features come from fans just like you who want to write about something in the comics that they are passionate about, so when we receive an idea for an article on Claypool horror comics, we'll do it!

RC

Robert Maxwell: hate-fighter

Too late for inclusion with my Robert Maxwell article last issue, is some information that not only puts him in a more positive light, but perfectly fits the "fighting hate" theme. I present it as a postscript to the article:

For all his alleged faults, Robert Maxwell also was responsible for a significant post-war shift in the tone of Superman on radio. In 1946, he initiated the pivotal "Unity House" storyline. Before, Superman battled mad scientists and Nazi spies. Now he took on a new foe, intolerance.

Unity House was an interfaith community center run by a priest and a rabbi. Youthful vigilantes inspired by Frank Hill's shadowy group, the Guardians, are out to destroy it. Enter the Man of Steel. After exposing Hill as an enemy spy, Superman delivers his message.

"You don't have to worry about him now," Superman told the townsfolk. "The country he told you he was guarding will take care of him, and see to it that he does no more harm. But remember this as long as you live: Whenever you meet up with anyone who is trying to cause trouble between people—anyone who tries to tell you that a man can't be a good citizen because he is a Catholic or a Jew, a Protestant or what you will—you can be sure he's a rotten citizen himself and an inhuman being. Don't ever forget that!"

This radical step led to a huge jump in Superman's ratings, endorsements from groups ranging from the Boys Clubs of America to the National Conference on Christians and Jews, and the inevitable hate mail. It especially stung the Ku Klux Klan.

"Superman also caused a considerable amount of bad feeling among the Ku Klux Klan by mentioning various KKK code words on his program," reported The New Republic. "The code words had been passed on to Superman via the Anti-Defamation League by Stetson Kennedy, an interloper from the newspaper *PM*. As a result, Samuel Green, Grand Dragon of the KKK, had to spend part of his afternoon with his ear pressed against the radio. As soon as Superman used a KKK password, Green had to send out urgent orders for a new one. The Grand Dragon is said to have taken this reverse very badly and to have vented his spite on Kellogg's Pep by attempting to stop local sales of the cereal. Fortunately, the grand old Kellogg people refused to be intimidated."

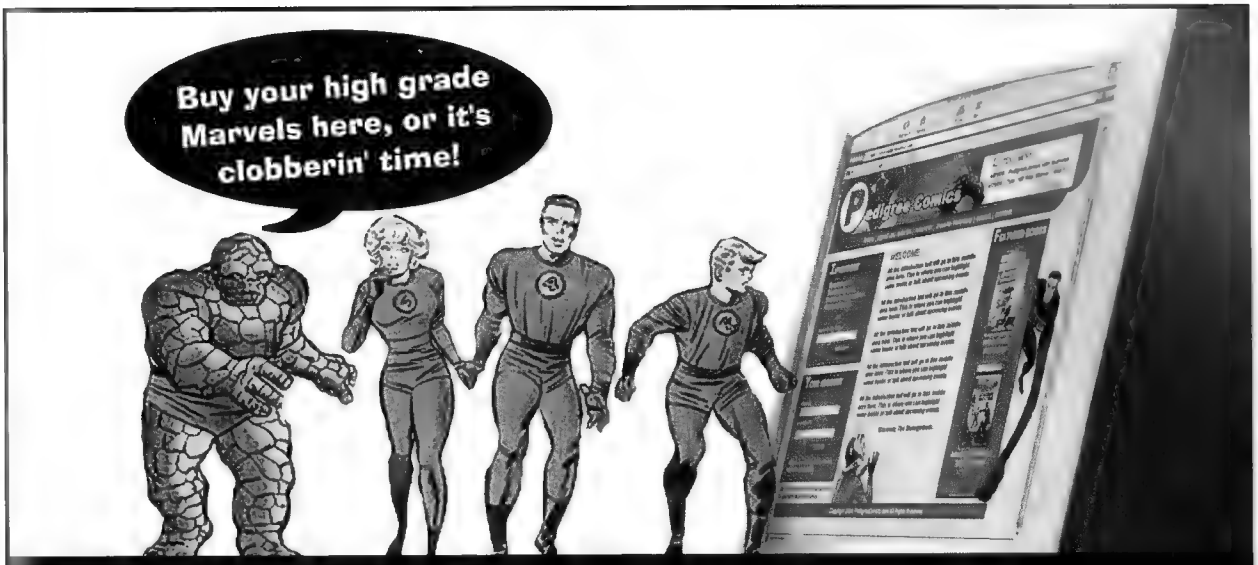
"Tolerance is rampant in Battle Creek," insisted producer Robert Maxwell of his sponsor. "Every bit of pep in Rice Krispies is tolerant."

The super success of "Unity House" inspired Maxwell to devise storylines focusing on other social issues like juvenile delinquency, and ultimately led to the message of tolerance that lies behind the struggle between Superman and the innocent and misunderstood Mole Men in that classic George Reeves Superman feature film, which Maxwell co-wrote with Whitney Ellsworth.

Will Murray

Thanks for the addendum, Will. After the end of WW2, after the Axis was squashed, and after the western world learned about what happened at Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald, the theme of intolerance became a mainstream topic of all American media. Films abounded, like Elia Kazan's Gentleman's Agreement *(1947),* Home of the Brave *(1949, in which a Black WW2 GI, who was a Jew in the original stage play, feels the racial intolerance later echoed in EC's famous "preachie," "In Gratitude"),* Crossfire *(1947, starring Robert Ryan as a Jew-hating soldier),* No Way Out *(1950, in which a racist refuses treatment from a Black doctor),* Trial *(1955, featuring a Mexican boy accused of murder and a lynch mob out for quick justice), and many others, including the Oscar-winning short subject* The House We Live In *(1945, starring Frank Sinatra). For more reading on this interesting subject, go to the website of Paula L. Woods, a young Black author of books like* Inner City Blues *(1999),* Stormy Weather *(2001) and a fascinating anthology called* Spooks, Spies, and Private Eyes: Black Mystery, Crime, and Suspense Fiction of the 20th Century *(1995): **www.woodsontheweb.com/Books**. It was inevitable that these themes would spread throughout the culture through comic books, TV shows, talk radio, and all the mass media.*

RC



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Nolan's Notebook

by Michelle Nolan

Politically Incorrect

The Wacky World of Dizzy Dames and Starlet O'Hara

Can you imagine a comic strip entitled "Moronica—Miss Nitwit of 2003?"

Of course you can't. Dumb blonde jokes may survive, but politically incorrect popular culture is largely confined to word of mouth in these supposedly more enlightened times.

A half-century ago, though, "Moronica, Miss Nitwit of 1953" was one of the stars of the six-issue run of *Dizzy Dames* from the American Comics Group, one of the leading second-tier publishers of the period.

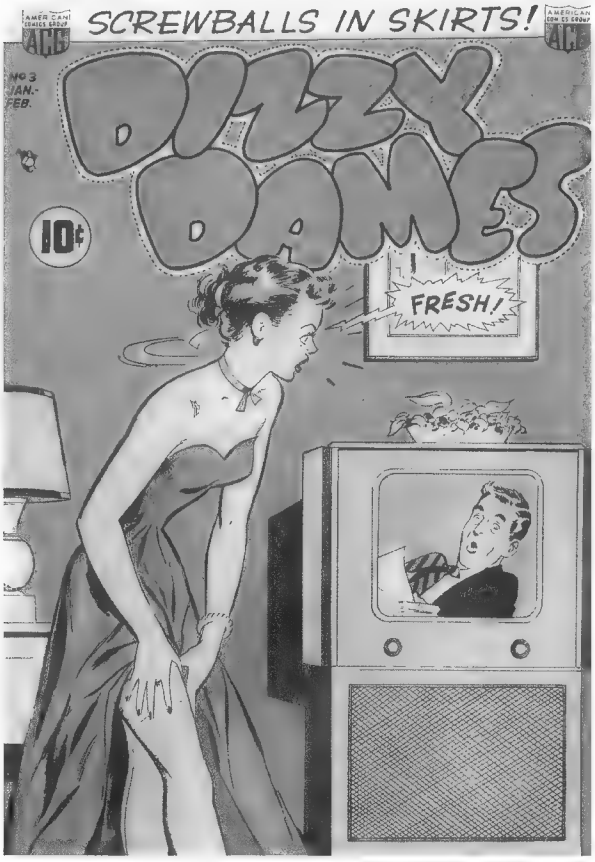
Issues of *Dizzy Dames* are hotly sought after by a small but avid group of collectors who enjoy gathering up the politically incorrect relics of our culture, produced before the movement toward a variety of human rights began in earnest during the 1960s.

Like many people with reasonably modern sensibilities, I feel a bit uncomfortable with many of these items. But they do provide a fascinating insight into our culture, not to mention attitudes that still continue to linger.

Politically incorrect humor is often found in teen humor comic books, which were a staple of the 1940s and '50s and even into the 1960s from many publishers. Teen humor, though, has been refined and cleaned up to an astonishing degree ever since by the Archie folks, beginning in the '60s.

Yet a handful of pre-Comics Code humor comics went completely over the top, in much the same spirit that our World War II and Korean War opponents—as genuinely nasty as their military leaders proved to be—were malevolently caricatured in comic books of the era, thus enhancing the collectibility of those comics.

Two such humor titles were *Starlet O'Hara in Hollywood*, a four issue run from Standard in 1948-49, and *Dizzy Dames* from ACG in 1952-53. The material in both was provided by the B. W. Sangor Shop, a leading producer of comic book stories. The Sangor Shop was especially important for both Standard (part of the pulp-paperback-comic book publishing empire ruled by Ned Pines and known by a half-dozen names) and for ACG (whose origins date to 1943 with several sub-publishers and which morphed into a company with a familiar little logo that began appearing in 1949).



Dizzy Dames #3 (Jan-Feb 1953).

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Richard E. Hughes, who enjoyed a three-decade career as an immensely prolific editor and writer, was affiliated with the Sangor Shop and edited ACG for two decades until the company folded in 1967. He was one of the first to place letters columns in some of his comic books, beating both DC and Marvel to that verbal punch by a couple of "generations" of comic book readers.

Hughes is best remembered for producing the first regularly published horror comic book, *Adventures Into the Unknown*, with the Fall 1948 issue. Issue 3 (Feb-Mar 1949) listed B. W. Sangor as one of the owners and issue 4 (Apr-May 1949) was the first with a letters column. Issue 5 (Jun-Jul 1949) was the first with an ACG logo. I remember Hughes said he was flattered when I wrote him a letter in 1965 referring to his earlier super-hero and horror comics.

ACG produced a few dozen comics every year, publishing a little of everything in the way of story types except super-heroes, which didn't really come along for ACG until Nemesis and Magicman appeared in the md-1960s, taking advantage of the DC/Marvel bandwagon.

ACG's horror/fantasy titles, especially the long-running *AITU* and *Forbidden Worlds*, were by far the company's primary claim to fame until titles like *Dizzy Dames* were discovered by a wider range of collectors in the 1980s. Moronica—a busty blonde, of course—was one of the stars of *Dizzy Dames*. Not many collectors, though, realized the blonde bombshell had her origins—as far as I know—in the fertile, manic mind of artist/writer Milt Gross (1895-53). His wild and wacky comic strips and humor books were a significant part of the American comic strip scene from the 1920s through the early 1950s.

I've never had a chance to look through the two issues of *Milt Gross Funnies*, his two-issue 1947 comic book apparently published in connection with Sangor and Hughes. As far as I know, Moronica made her debut with three "backup" stories in Standard's *Starlet O'Hara* #1 (Dec 1948), with all the art contributed by the Sangor Shop. Moronica backup stories continued through #4 (Sep 1949), although Standard reduced its titles to 36 pages in 1949, so she was limited to one story.

The first issue of *Starlet O'Hara*, a star-struck Hollywood wanna-be who was drawn by Owen Fitzgerald, featured a plug for "Moronica, Miss Nitwitt of 1948" at the bottom and "The Terrific Teen-Age Comic" in a star at the top right. Moronica wasn't plugged again until #4—by which time she had graduated to "Miss Nitwit of 1949"—and beginning with #2, that top blurb was accurately changed to "Her Romantic Adventures in Movieland," referring to Miss Starlet.

Although the *Starlet O'Hara* title doubtless was at least partly aimed at teen readers, it more properly was categorized as a comic book of "working girl" stories in the classic tradition, long since a part of the comic strips and made famous in comic books by the likes of Marvel's *Millie the Model*.

MORONICA
PARDON, MISS, BUT DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE ON TELEVISION?
GOSH! AND I THOUGHT IT WAS A BUS STOP!
BUS STOP
WELL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, HERE WE ARE AGAIN WITH "YOUR MAN IN THE STREET" TELECAST -- THE PROGRAM THAT BRINGS YOU THE INTELLIGENT COMMENT OF THE ORDINARY AMERICAN ON VITAL QUESTIONS OF THIS DAY!
AH, THERE'S AN ATTRACTIVE YOUNG LADY WAITING FOR THE TRAFFIC SIGNAL TO CHANGE! I'LL SEE IF I CAN GET HER.
Moronica from **Dizzy Dames** #1 (Sep-Oct 1952).

The first issue of *Starlet O'Hara*, which represented Standard's ongoing late '40s effort to turn away from super-heroes, ironically contained separate advertisements featuring those old super courtroom rivals, Captain Marvel and Superman! Just one of those delightful discoveries to be made in the pages of old funnybooks.

A full-page ad peddled the Captain Marvel wrist watch for $5.95—"As

indestructible—as accurate—as unfailing as Captain Marvel himself." Accurate? Did anyone ever say Captain Marvel was accurate? The ad stated the watch was for boys and girls, but insisted that "Dad will want one, too!" Presumably, Mom had far too much sense to be caught dead wearing a Captain Marvel wristwatch! But we all know Dad is just a kid at heart, right?

Meanwhile, the full-page ad for "the greatest Erector set of all time"—1948 price, $50!—featured a Superman giveaway comic booklet entitled "Superman at the Gilbert Hall of Science," which is given a "6" in the Gerber Photo-Journal (meaning 50 to 200 copies exist). Considering inflation, a $50 Erector set in 1948 translates to about $500 today! Guess it's a good thing this ad was addressed to "Boys!" in bold red letters. Those pesky little girls weren't worth such a valuable educational toy, right? Political incorrectness is where you find it!

But then, a near-mint copy of the Superman booklet is worth more than the Erector set! Or is it? Are old Erector sets valuable fodder for e-Bay? Are girls allowed to bid?

By the time *Starlet O'Hara* #4 was published, Standard had worked up a Starlet O'Hara pen-pal page, a Starlet O'Hara name-a-dog contest (in which five cocker spaniel pups would be given away)—and a Starlet fan club, all gloriously presented on their own pages in a 36-page comic book. For fifty cents, readers would be sent a genuine cotton knitted Starlet O'Hara t-shirt and a membership card. I can't ever remember seeing the last issue of a short-run title offering so many character-driven collectibles? I wonder if any of them still exist. Has anyone ever seen a genuine Starlet O'Hara t-shirt?

KNOTHEAD
nancy
your UNCLE SAM wants YOU!
GOLLY! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I HAD AN UNCLE!
GO TO YOUR NEAREST ARMY RECRUITING CENTER NOW!
BUT I MUST HAVE -- AND WHAT'S MORE, HE KNOWS ME; EVEN IF I DON'T KNOW HIM! OTHERWISE, HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD ALL THOSE SIGNS PUT UP SAYING HE WANTS ME!
GUESS I BETTER LOOK HIM UP RIGHT AWAY! IT MUST BE SOMETHING IMPORTANT OR HE WOULDN'T HAVE GONE TO ALL THIS TROUBLE TO GET ME!
Knothead Nancy from **Dizzy Dames** #5 (May-Jun 1953).

The Sangor Shop, not Standard, obviously owned the copyright on Starlet O'Hara and Moronica, because they wound up in several 1950s issues of the long-running ACG teen-humor titles *Cookie* and *The Kilroys*. Both of those titles disappeared in the ACG implosion of 1955 (more on that later).

Moronica, though, found her primary home in the one-year run of *Dizzy Dames* #1 (Sep-Oct 1952) through #6 (Jul-Aug 1953), with each issue bannered "Screwballs in Skirts!" She was accompanied by the loony-bin likes of Man-Huntin' Minnie of Delta Pu, Dee Licious, Knothead Nellie and Knothead Nancy (must have been sisters!), Broadway Babes, Looney Lucy, Screwball Sal, Daffy Damsels—well, you get the idea. The height of politically incorrect characters!

Moronica, though, was the star attraction. She started a riot in #1 over her appearance on television in a "man on the street" program, causing the announcer to say, "Radio may be dead, but believe me, Buster, I'm going back to it!" The question was "What do you think of America's tax structure?" to which Moronica replied, "I think it's beautiful…I think America's tax structure is one of the prettiest buildings in Washington!"

By the time Moronica graduated to "Miss Nitwit of 1953" in *Dizzy Dames* #3, she's sitting on a park bench looking for a job, causing two squirrels to look at her with dismay. "I'm not giving her any more of my nuts, becuzz she never plays with us like the other squirrels do!" And when the employment agency finally sends her out on a job as a gardener, the woman at the door asks, "Are you a horticulturist?" to which Moronica replies, "No, ma'am, I'm a Republican!"

That elicits the response, "Please, Miss! Don't show your ignorance!" To which Moronica responds, "That's not ignorance, that's a vaccination scar!" When she puts pillows and sheets in the flower beds and is asked what kind of gardener she is, she replies "A girl gardener!" Then she proceeds to pluck out all the daffodils, explaining, "Who wants crazy flowers growing around their house? If you want dils, I'll plant sane dils, not these daffy ones!"

By this time, you may have decided that $20 or whatever a low-grade copy of *Dizzy Dames* costs these days may not be your cup of tea. It's definitely a period piece!

Starlet O'Hara #1 is one of those undiscovered little Golden Age gems,

since it is the only comic book (to my knowledge, anyway) to contain not one, not two, but three Moronica stories. Not to mention three epics of Starlet O'Hara, who was hell bent on chasing every male movie star in Hollywood.

One can only guess why *Starlet O'Hara* lasted only four issues, especially with such a big house ad presence in #4—or why *Starlet O'Hara* was one of the few Standard comics of the late 1940s and early 1950s to begin with #1 and not #5 or #11.

Here's a hint, courtesy of a check of the fabulous year-by-year, issue-by-issue charts compiled by Southern California comics historian Dan Stevenson. Standard published 119 comics with 1949 dates—spread over an amazing 39 titles! Following the demise of the company's long-running superheroes in '49, not many Standard titles lasted long enough on the crowded newsstands of the period to test whether they would sell. *Starlet O'Hara* was one of 14 titles that Standard cancelled in '49.

Dizzy Dames, on the other hand, truly may not have sold well enough to merit continued publication. ACG tended to publish a small but generally stable number of titles after the logo got the company officially going in 1949. Stevenson's charts show that the company published 99 comics with 1953

MAN-HUNTIN'
MINNIE
of DELTA PU!
SORORITY LIGHTS OUT AFTER 10 P.M.
DARN! LEGGEE, WHICH'LL IT BE? ... JOE? JACKIE? --NAW! TOM? DICK? --NAW! HECK, WODDA JOB!
HI, MINNIE! I THOUGHT I'D DROP IN TO YOUR ROOM AND SEE WHAT YOU WERE DOING!... AND JUST WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DELTA PU
TRY'N TO DECIDE SOMETHIN': YA SEE ALL THESE PICTURES? THEY'RE PHOTOGRAPHS OF ALL THE GUYS IN THIS COLLEGE THAT I LIKE AND THAT DON'T LIKE ME!
SO WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DECIDE?
I'M TRYING TO DECIDE WHICH ONE IT IS THAT'S NOT TAKIN' ME ON A DATE TONIGHT!... I'VE GOT IT!... DICK! OF ALL THE GUYS WHO NEVER TAKE ME OUT, I LIKE NOT GOING OUT WITH HIM BEST!
HUH? WHAT? WHAT SHE SAY? WHAT?

Man-Huntin' Minnie from **Dizzy Dames** #1 (Sep-Oct 1952).

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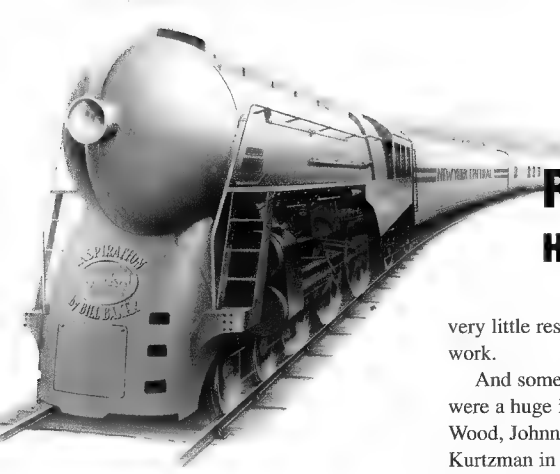
dates, but that ACG did not start any new titles in 1953. On the other hand, ACG cancelled not only *Dizzy Dames* but five other titles that year—*Hooded Horseman* (which later returned briefly), *Operation Peril*, *Skeleton Hand*, *Soldiers of Fortune* and *Spy Hunters*.

In 1955, however, ACG suffered a genuine late-spring implosion during a general industry wide slump. The company cancelled *Commander Battle*, *Cookie*, *Hooded Horseman* (again), *The Kilroys*, *Young Heroes*, *Spencer Spook* (a two-issue continuation of *Giggle*) and *Teepee Tim* (a wildly politically incorrect three-issue continuation of *Ha-Ha*), with final issues all dated between June and September 1955. The only remaining ACG titles, two fantasy and two romance, all run ten issues in 1956—*AITU*, *Forbidden Worlds*, *Confessions of the Lovelorn* and *My Romantic Adventures*.

ACG actually restarted *Forbidden Worlds* with #35 (Aug 1955) after a nine-month hiatus, apparently caused by the creation of the Comics Code Authority. Perhaps there was concern over whether the title "Forbidden" would be allowed.

By this time, though, there was no room for a title like *Dizzy Dames*. One can't help but wonder if the Comics Code would have permitted that! Not to mention her cleavage.



ReMake/ReModel

Howard Chaykin on his influences

interview by Bill Baker

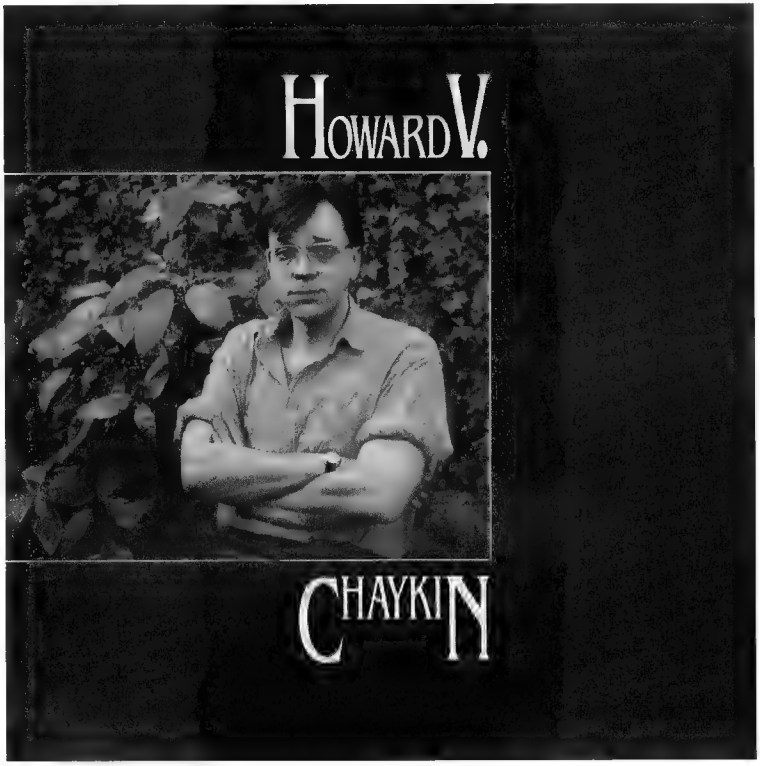
Whether you first encountered his work in the pages of Men of War *or* Shadow *titles, where he put his own stamp on characters as diverse as Enemy Ace and that dark cloaked inflictor of pulp-tinged vengeance, or between the covers of books like* American Flagg! *or* Star*Reach *which featured his own creations, it's a fairly safe bet that Howard Chaykin's distinctive layouts and daring designs, along with his hard-hitting and darkly satiric scripting, managed to effectively capture and keep your attention. As such recent releases as the original graphic novels* Barnum! *and* Mighty Love *have proven, Chaykin has only keenly honed both this ability and his considerable talents over the years.*

And when you consider some of the different folks who have contributed to his zeitgeist, it only makes sense.

Comic Book Marketplace: Who were some of the different people who first inspired you as artists, and what about their work really moved or excited you?

Howard Chaykin: Well, probably the single most important influences on me, as a cartoonist, were guys who were working at DC Comics in the fifties and sixties. Those four men really boil down to Gil Kane and Alex Toth, Joe Kubert and Carmine Infantino. While I love the *Fantastic Four* and other Kirby books that were coming out at Marvel, by the time that stuff came out, I had already decided where I was going—so there's very little resonance of Jack Kirby in my work.

And some ten years later, the EC guys were a huge influence on me; Wallace Wood, Johnny Craig and Harvey Kurtzman in particular. Later, when you step outside of comic books and go to illustration, men like Robert Fawcett, Harry Beckoff, Austin Briggs, Jon Whitcomb, Herbert Paus, Bob Peak, Barron Storey. Outside of visuals, guys like Richard Condon, a great satirist and political novelist, responsible for everything from *The Manchurian Candidate* to *Prizzi's Honor*.



And the dancer and choreographer Bob Fosse was an enormous influence on me. He was a guy who made super-heroes out of dancers.

CBM: Out of all those names, I suspect that a lot of folks could discover for themselves how the various folks have influenced your work simply by giving your different books a serious read—save one. So, with Fosse, was it just his uncanny ability to re-imagine not just dance, but also the way it was performed and even presented to an audience that inspired you, or might there have been some other aspects of his life and work that had some kind of resonance for you?

Chaykin: Fosse was a heterosexual guy in a patently homosexual business,
[continued on page 19]

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by Pat Calhoun

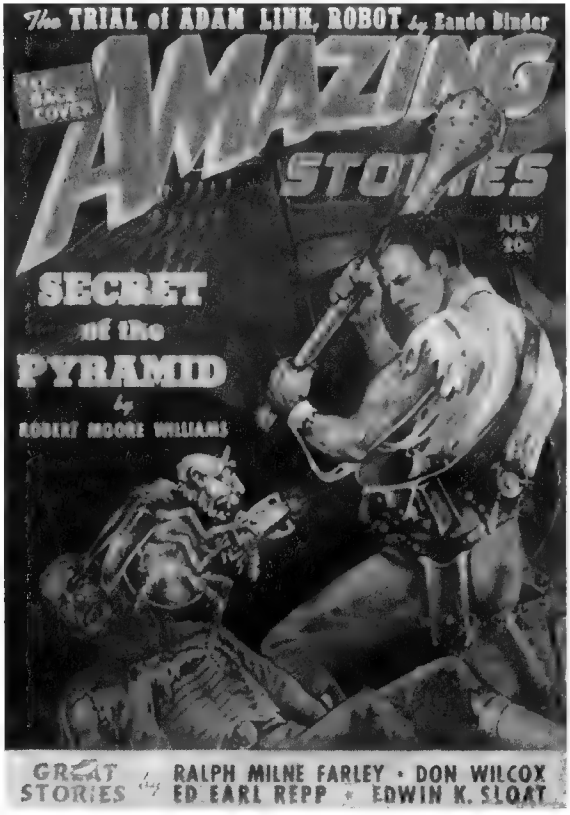
Roby, Ilda, and Adam: Fighting Hate

Ever since Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein created an artificial human back in 1818, the "lab life" has shown us that we have less to fear from the monsters we create than the ones we are. For these spawns of science always encounter great persecution from the general populace, who fear them for their differentness. Similarly, when Karl Capek wrote *R.U.R.* in 1921 and coined the term robot for his human-like machine slaves, the sentience of the metal "men" revealed people as their oppressors. And, of course, many science fiction stories deal with the chaos that results when interplanetary visitors make first contact and their strangeness provokes panic. Since aliens come from other worlds, and androids are often made with "recycled" dead bodies, the robot represents the most completely human invention of the three. This month let's take a quick look at three Silver Age comics that grapple with the ethics of intelligent and emotive machines.

For the most part the SF short story "morality plays" use robots as a metaphor for race relations. Thus to fear or hate someone whose skin is a different color is akin to disliking someone whose skin is a different substance entirely. "The Iron Hulk" from *World of Fantasy* #19 (Aug 1959) is a particularly poignant tale that opens with a father taking his young son to the store to buy him a robot "playmate." The salesman cautions the father that the new models have a more "sensitive mechanism" than previous ones, but Dad is convinced they're just "iron hulks." Tim and "Roby" quickly become friends, but trouble comes when the family has to move to a small apartment where there's no room for Roby. Dad hauls the "hulk" to the junkyard—still believing it just a machine. But Tim is inconsolable, and finally runs from home towards the junkyard. And crossing the railroad tracks his foot gets stuck—as a train is coming. Will Roby hear his cries and rush to his rescue, convincing Dad that the robot is indeed more than machine? Have you ever read any Silver Age comics?

Call it a cornball classic if you must, but even the father relents when he sees the tears in Roby's eyes after the rescue. Joe Sinnott's art unabashedly captures all the emotions with crisp line work that perfectly paces the narrative. This, by the way, was the final issue of *World of Fantasy*, as pre-hero Marvel instead kept their two new fantasy titles, *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales to Astonish* to run with the revived *Strange Tales* and *Journey Into Mystery* as they geared up their fantasy line for the new decade.

DC took a subtle approach to human-robot relationships in their Star Hawkins series that ran in every third issue of *Strange Adventures* in the early 1960s. Star was a 21st-century detective with a robot secretary, Ilda. Star maintained a great respect for Ilda's secretarial skills as well as her "personality." They stopped short of having an affair (which the Comics Code would probably have nixed anyway), but it should be noted that Ilda had a pretty fair figure. It was a nice pre-empting of any ill will 'twixt man and machine, and


The TRIAL of ADAM LINK, ROBOT by Eando Binder
AMAZING STORIES
JULY
SECRET of the PYRAMID
by
ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS
GREAT STORIES by RALPH MILNE FARLEY • DON WILCOX
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This Robert Fuqua **Amazing** cover with the original July 1939 appearance of Otto (Eando) Binder's "The Trial of Adam Link" is available as a poster from barnesandoble.com, from 20x29 Standard Paper at $19.95 to 44x66 Museum-Size Canvas at $595.

World of Fantasy #19 (Aug 1959) "The Gargoyle from the Fifth Galaxy" is one of those yarns where the alien visitor's appearance is so horrifying that we drive it away and later decipher the message it leaves that it was here to help us.

Star's only failing was that when he ran low on dough he'd park Ilda at the pawn shop.

In *Strange Adventures* #125 (Feb 1961) "The Case of the Vanishing Robots" Ilda gets stolen (from the pawn shop!). Her only hope of rescue is if she can overcome the fact that her "acto fuse" has been taken out and move enough to get a message to Star. She finds a phone in the room and somehow dials Star's number, but when he answers she can't speak. She thinks fast and puts the receiver down

These Joe Sinnott panels from "The Iron Hulk" give good shots of Tim and Roby as the climactic situation sets up when Tim gets his foot caught in the railway track. The futuristic cityscape in the first panel shows Sinnott's sure touch with SF.

TIM RAN FROM THE HOUSE... AND HEADED FOR THE JUNK DEALER...
ROBY'S NOT ONLY A MACHINE! HE'S GOT FEELINGS!... JUST LIKE HUMANS DO!... AND I CAN'T LEAVE HIM ALONE... WITH STRANGERS!

ON HIS WAY, TIM HAD TO CROSS THE RAILROAD TRACKS... AS HE DID SO, HIS HASTE MADE HIM CARELESS, AND...
MY FOOT!... IT'S CAUGHT! I CAN'T GET IT LOOSE!

"ON THE WAY HERE, MR. HAWKINS REVEALED TO ME THAT HE HAS DEFINITE EXPECTATIONS..."
I'M GOING TO LAND A NEW ASSIGNMENT, ILDA! YOU WON'T BE IN HOCK LONG... JUST KEEP... A...er... STIFF UPPER LIP!
I'LL BE ROOTING FOR YOU, BOSS!
TAXI

This 21st-century cityscape is full of bustle and charm—as Star Hawkins escorts Ilda to the pawn shop. Somehow, despite the crassness of hocking his helper, Star was pretty good about accepting his artificial assistant as a fellow conscious being.

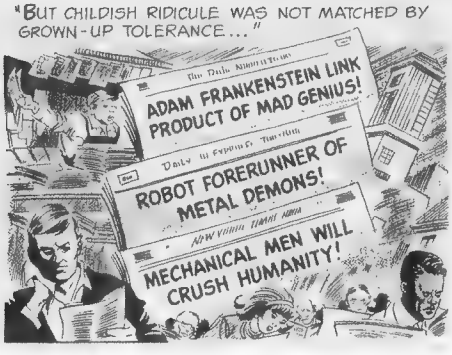
Creepy #4 (1965) Under a Frank Frazetta full moon the werewolf rises up over his terror-stricken prey. In addition to the outstanding Adam Link adaptation, this issue also features an excellent rendition of Ambrose Bierce's classic "The Damned Thing."

on the counter, then taps her fingers near it in imitation of her typing! What a secretary! When this story was reprinted (in *Mysteries In Space*) they credited the script to Gardner Fox, but it's listed as by John Broome on the Grand Comic Book Database. What seems indisputable is that the vivid art is Mike Sekowsky's pencils with Bernie Sachs' inks, and that the book was edited by the living legend (though recently deceased, he lives on when we read and remember his work!) Julie Schwartz.

No series explored the problems of thinking machines more than the Adam Link stories that Otto Binder adapted from his late-1930s early-1940s SF yarns into comic scripts for Jim Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* in the mid-1960s. The artist on these tales was Joe Orlando, who'd also drawn Adam Link adaptations for EC in the early 1950s. Perhaps the best of the Silver series was the first adaptation, "The Trial of Adam Link" in *Creepy* #4 (1965). This was the second story of the original series, having first appeared in the July 1939 *Amazing Stories*, as likely as not "inspired" by the huge reader response to the debut, "I, Robot" in the January issue. Ziff-Davis had bought the anemic-looking *Amazing* back in 1938 and wisely installed young fan Raymond A. Palmer as editor. He created the kind of mag where reader response could provoke sequels. The aforementioned Julie Schwartz made a "small" homage to Ray when he revived the Atom for the Silver Age, giving him the secret identity of Ray Palmer.

This is one of those stories with treasures on every page, as Orlando's art matches Binder's script in intensity and drive. Fortunately, Dr. Link, Adam's creator, had a nephew who was a lawyer, so that—after the mob decides to blame Adam when Dr. Link dies in a lab accident—Tom Link can come to the robot's

Adam Link does find an open-minded newsman in the courtroom, but when the reporter writes in the robot's defense the voice of reason gets drowned out by cries for "blood" in all the other papers. **Creepy** #4, "The Trial of Adam Link" pages 3 and 4.

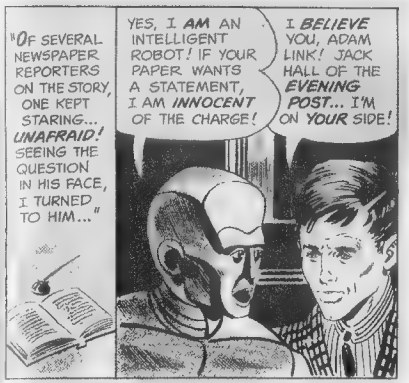

"BUT CHILDISH RIDICULE WAS NOT MATCHED BY GROWN-UP TOLERANCE..."
ADAM FRANKENSTEIN LINK PRODUCT OF MAD GENIUS!
ROBOT FORERUNNER OF METAL DEMONS!
MECHANICAL MEN WILL CRUSH HUMANITY!

"STARTLINGLY, I HAD ONE DEFENDER IN THE PRESS... AND A NEW FRIEND..."
LISSEN TO THIS JACK HALL! SAYS THERE'S NO PROOF THAT TIN-MAN'S A MENACE... CLAIMS ANYBODY--EVEN ROBOTS--ARE INNOCENT UNTIL GUILT IS PROVED!
ROBOT-LOVER! THE GUY OUGHTA BE LYNCHED!

Strange Adventures #125 (Feb 1961) The winged gorillas rapidly descended into parody, but this early cover appearance (the Grand Comic Book Database attributes it to Sid Greene) stills packs a punch. Star Hawkins gets "hawked" above the title logo.

defense. He wins Adam a jury trial, in itself a victory for the rights of an intelligent being. But the verdict is inevitable, and Binder and Orlando set it up so that it's all too clear who are humans and who are monsters.

So it's not just the robot's humanity that serves as the subject of these tales, but our own inhumanity. We not only get entertained with good comics, but we get a chance to be better, more tolerant people. This is one of the secrets as to why the Silver Age is so fondly remembered.


"OF SEVERAL NEWSPAPER REPORTERS ON THE STORY, ONE KEPT STARING... UNAFRAID! SEEING THE QUESTION IN HIS FACE, I TURNED TO HIM..."
YES, I AM AN INTELLIGENT ROBOT! IF YOUR PAPER WANTS A STATEMENT, I AM INNOCENT OF THE CHARGE!
I BELIEVE YOU, ADAM LINK! JACK HALL OF THE EVENING POST... I'M ON YOUR SIDE!

Inspiration Central: Chaykin

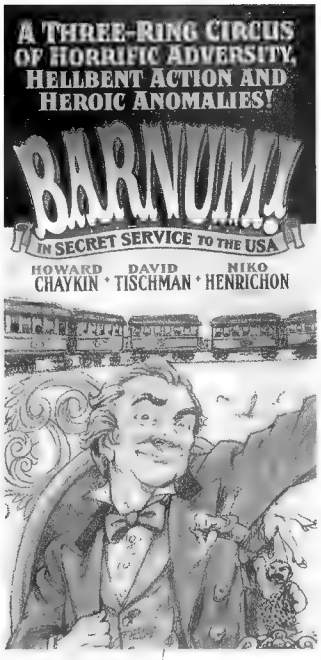
[continued from page 14]

and there was something incredibly sexual about his work. But it was also about movement. When I saw the movie version of *The Pajama Game* as a kid, with "Steam Heat," I went nuts. This is a guy who really understood movement. Years and years later, when I saw *Dancing*, a collection of set pieces he had choreographed, it was like watching Gil Kane figures in motion—and Gil's figures were always influenced by dance.

And, to a great extent, I follow through in that tradition. I'm a great believer in fluidity and choreography, frequently at the expense of weight and power, but in the service of movement.

Also, Fosse had a self-destructive attitude that I really embraced when I was a younger man. [Laughter] I look back on it now, and I'm deeply grateful for the cautionary nature of my reaction to his self-destruction.

As are we all, Howard, as are we all.


A THREE-RING CIRCUS OF HORRIFIC ADVERSITY, HELLBENT ACTION AND HEROIC ANOMALIES!
BARNUM!
IN SECRET SERVICE TO THE USA
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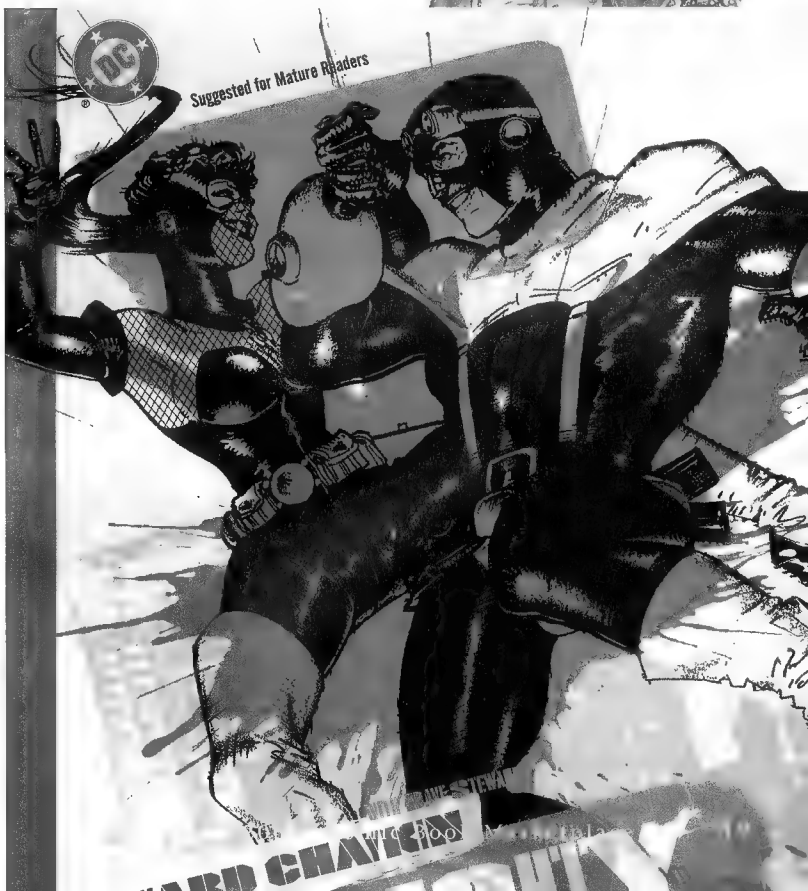


FORGING THE METAL MEN

by Will Murray

One of the surprise successes of the early Silver Age of Comics was not a revival of a Golden Age super-hero, but a throwaway one-shot idea that fired the imagination of 1962 comics readers. DC's unintended answer to *The Fantastic Four*: The Metal Men.

Longtime DC writer-editor Robert Kanigher created the series. If there was ever a certifiable Jewish mystic in comics, it was the enigmatic Kanigher. Although best known for his war heroes like Sgt. Rock and Enemy Ace, Kanigher was equally at home in the realm of fantasy. A long line of Golden Age super-heroes ranging from Captain Marvel to Steel Sterling benefited from his able scripting. Kanigher helped kick off the Silver Age of Comics when he scripted the first revived Flash stories for *Showcase*. Yet in later interviews, he presented a Talmudic, if not Kabbalistic personality, speaking frankly yet cryptically about his ESP and espousing metaphysical views on the creative process.

Nowhere else in his career was Robert Kanigher more magical than the week he created the Metal Men in the white-hot fires of a deadline emergency.

"Metal Men was the brainchild of Bob Kanigher," Metal Men inker Mike Esposito confirms. "They had to put out *Showcase* every three or four months. Each editor had a turn at producing new characters, and they figured that would be a springboard for new ideas. If one of them catches on, you'd continue. But nothing caught on. *Suicide Squad* didn't catch on. *Rip Hunter* wasn't doing so well. But they were all started in that particular vein in *Showcase* or *Brave and Bold*. So here was Kanigher's turn, and he came up with an idea of a doctor that creates these robots."

Robert Kanigher told it this way:

"What happened was that on my way out one Friday evening Irwin Donenfeld came to me and said, 'I know it's not your turn to do *Showcase*, but none of the other editors can come up with an idea. Ya got anything?' I said, 'Metal Men.' I said, 'Metal robots with human characteristics that retain their metal characteristics simultaneously.' And he said 'Do it.' That's all."

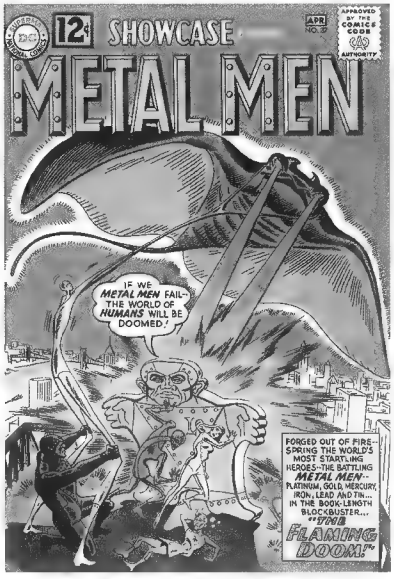
The longtime DC writer-editor wasted no time getting down to brass tacks.

"I regret that I'm not versed in science," he admitted. "I gave myself a crash course in chemistry from a battered book that Julie Schwartz had on his desk. *Nostrand's*. It was a battered old edition. I [spent] about an hour on the nuclear-metallurgic signs and the properties of each metal.

"For instance, I learned that gold could be hammered out to a distance of 1,000th of a human hair, and stretched out to one mile. Well, that gave me all the freedom in the world to do whatever I wanted to do! And I learned that tin and iron merged together were stronger than steel. So I used that."

Overnight, the idea percolated in the cauldron of Kanigher's alchemistic imagination. He had a band of unique robots, but where did they come from? Kanigher devised a tweedy genius inventor, Dr. Will Magnus, as his protagonist. Magnus bore a general resemblance to the pipe-smoking writer himself.

"The next morning I drove my daughter Jan to Julliard's School of Music, where she was taking an advanced course in ballet for children," he recounted. "It was winter. I parked on a deserted street facing the Hudson River and warmed myself by writing in a spiral notebook with ruled pages. When Jan was finished I drove home with her. I continued writing. I finished the 25 pages the next day and my wife Bern stoically typed the script."


12¢
SHOWCASE
METAL MEN
APR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IF WE METAL MEN FAIL-THE WORLD OF HUMANS WILL BE DOOMED!
FORGED OUT OF FIRE-SPRING THE WORLD'S MOST STARTLING HEROES--THE BATTLING METAL MEN--PLATINUM, GOLD, MERCURY, IRON, LEAD AND TIN... IN THE BOOK-LENGTH BLOCKBUSTER... "THE FLAMING DOOM!"

Showcase #37 (Mar/Apr 1962).

And like an alchemist of old, Kanigher disclaimed full responsibility for what he had wrought.

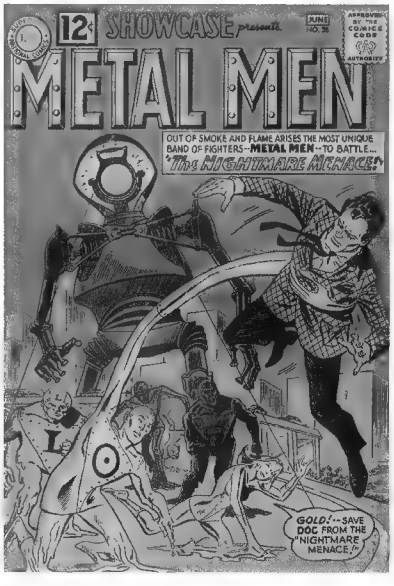
"They waved at me like genii from a corked bottle. I had nothing to do with it. I uncorked it and out they sprang. Gold was the most difficult. From the viewpoint of character, he's a noble metal. How do you handle nobility without making him Mister Clean? Lead was easy. I made him like William Bendix, the actor, except not as intelligent as Bendix. I had him speak with 'uh-huh, dese, dose, and dems.' Iron was the strong man of metals.

"So then I put Tin in, and I felt Tin was the lowliest metal. How can I show that Tin was the lowliest metal? I give him an inferiority complex. How can I show an inferiority complex? I give him a stutter. That's the way my brain works. The only thing I knew about Mercury was that it's in a thermometer. When your temperature's high, it shoots up. When it's low, it goes down. So I made him the cranky one. People loved him. He shoots up and down and he thinks he should be the leader of the group and so forth."

"I had to have a woman, a female. So I made Platinum the female. Out of Platinum I made Tina. I made her unpredictable. She didn't believe she was a robot. She fell in love with the creator of the Metal Men, Doc Magnus. She gave him a lot of trouble. Delicious. The kind that men fantasize about. And she just as firmly believes that her inventor doesn't realize he's in love with her."

The molds ready, it was time to cast the Metal Men in reality.

"Early Monday morning I called Ross Andru," recalled Kanigher. "When he came in I handed him the 25 pages of finished script and 25 blank sheets of typewriter paper, I asked him to do a breakdown. One blank sheet for one page of script. The roughest of roughs. While I worked on my other books with writers and artists, Ross would come in with a page of breakdowns at a time. At a glance I could see where a long shot could be a close-up instead, a close-up for a long shot, a horizontal for a vertical, a vertical for a horizontal, one panel for several across, several for a single panel. I wanted a different kind of layout. To suggest the transformation of the different metals. An entirely different kind of flow. Incredibly, Ross gave me what I wanted, made whatever changes were necessary. He was nothing short of brilliant. In several hours he was finished. He went home to do the complete job with Mike Esposito inking with great style."


12¢
SHOWCASE presents
JUNE
METAL MEN
OUT OF SMOKE AND FLAME ARISES THE MOST UNIQUE BAND OF FIGHTERS--METAL MEN--TO BATTLE...
"The NIGHTMARE MENACE!"
GOLD!--SAVE DOC FROM THE "NIGHTMARE MENACE!"
Showcase #38 (May/Jun 1962).

"I thought and still think that was the best idea he had done," Esposito confessed. "Bob left the character design up to Ross and myself, under his supervision of course."

"First of all," Andru recalled, "I decided to come up with a common costume for all of them, and then modify it according to their bodies and temperaments. In those days we always put a symbol on each super-hero's chest, so I followed through and took the symbols that Bob suggested, which were the actual symbols for the metals. Then I thought about the different characteristics of each metal.

"We decided to make Mercury red. I wanted to convey the idea of the old Fahrenheit thermometer; one end was a bulb and the other was a tube. So in a sense, Mercury's head was the bulb and his spinal column was the tube, to which I added arms and legs. I thought of Mercury as a soft, globular metal.

"I thought of Tin as being angular and flat. Since he had an inferiority complex, he would be the smallest of the bunch.

"Gold, of course, had to be the noble metal. I figured he would be an athletic figure, a modified Greek ideal of eight-heads tall. He would essentially be a good-looking guy in the regular Metal Men suit.

"I thought of Lead as being heavy and corpulent. My first idea was to make him a big chunk. But I didn't want to overdo it. If he were too far off, he wouldn't appear human. So I just heavied everything up, rather than really exaggerate it.

"Iron, I figured, had to be stronger than Lead, so he would be taller than Lead. Of course he would be blue, dark blue. And black was added to, again, give him a feeling of solidity.

"Platinum wore the female version of the same outfit. On top of her head, she had a cap with a different kind of shape, so that we could see her 'hair.' Her torso was a female version of the same kind of a costume that the men had.

"It was sort of like taking different racial characteristics—and the metals have their different racial characteristics, in a sense—and translating them to the character of the metal itself. Anyway, that was *my* solution."

The pressure to produce was immense, remembered Esposito: "Bob said, 'We gotta turn this out in one week.'"

"Meanwhile," Kanigher recalled, "I was thinking of the cover."

The now-classic image presented a technical problem.

Esposito explained, "The cover was the one with the giant stingray coming down over the rooftops and bombarding the Metal Men on the rooftop. Ross didn't know what to do, so Bob Kanigher said, 'We want to play up the stingray' because at that time, cheap B movies of science fiction were a big thing, with stingrays and things from outer space. So he had this thing attacking and it had to be big. So that meant the Metal Men had to be tiny, like an inch and a half high. I hated the cover because they were on the bottom, about an inch high, and this big stingray is the whole cover."

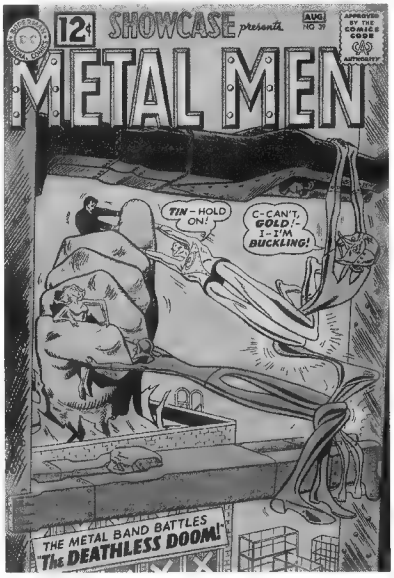
Considered one of the most innovative artists at DC at that time, Andru excelled at design.

"Ross is not afraid to invent new stuff," Esposito pointed out. "He doesn't like to repeat himself. When you look at his work, it's amazing that in such a little space he can get so much picture. His pictures are composed…they go in and in and in, through layer upon layer. He really should have been a movie director."

"I try to make my mind and eye think like a camera," Andru once revealed. "Any optical effect that creates shock and surprise, I'm impressed by, and I try to incorporate it to the best of my ability

if I can."

In *Showcase* #37's "The Flaming Doom," a giant flying manta ray comes screaming out of the Arctic, and Doc Magnus forges the Metal Men to combat it. These six robots put up a valiant fight on behalf of humanity, each with unique ductile and metallurgical properties.



Showcase #39 (Jul/Aug 1962).

"Their characters dictated their treatment," Kanigher related. "I used the laws of probability as suggested by that wonderful, big, fat, volume of *Nostrand's*. I read that gold could be wound to 1,000th part of a single human hair. That left the door open for any effect I wished providing I kept the Metal Men consistent both in human characteristics and metallic characteristics. Lead was a shield. Tin combined with Lead became stronger than Iron. Iron by himself was strong but not as supple as steel. Lead was a protective shield. Mercury was a liquid metal. Tina was, well, Tina."

Combining their strengths, the Metal Men defeat the menace, but at the cost of their mechanical lives. The story ends with the question of their resurrection hanging in the air. But it was only a tease. No one, least of all Robert Kanigher, dreamed of a second act for the Metal Men.

But the colorful band, willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of humanity, resonated with readers. Kanigher's deft blending of metallic properties with humanlike personalities took the concept to a level far above the typical DC fare of 1962, and encroached on the emerging Marvel Comics formula of heroes you could care about.

"I don't plot," he once said. "I get an emotional idea which fuels the story. Characterization furnishes me with all the action I need. The action is plumbing. It's easy. Nothing to it. It's true action. It's not expected action, when it springs from the characterization."

Esposito noted, "He researched what gold can do—that you can thin it out and flatten it out for miles and still hold its strength. So Gold as a character could almost be like Plastic Man. He could make himself minutely thin and stretch way across a bridge span for them to climb. Mercury was a hothead, like a thermometer. Tin was kind of timid. Iron was very powerful, and when mixed with Tin becomes unbeatable. There's Lead, which protected them from Gamma rays and what have you. And of course little Tina, who fell in love with Doc Magnus because he messed up her responsometer. But I loved it."

"I loved them," echoed Kanigher. "Especially Tina. But they were so difficult to do I didn't want to write another book. I thought I was finished with them. But 7,000 letters came in from readers. All enthusiastic. I was stuck with them and they with me. And the book steadily rose."

Revived in *Showcase* #38, the Metal Men went on to battle robotic and chemical menaces like the acid-spewing Chemo, and proved so popular they won an unprecedented four *Showcase* appearances. Each time, they perished valiantly in the struggle. It was a poignant new theme in comics: self-sacrificing heroes who actually died. Each time he undertook the task of resurrecting them, Doc Magnus faced a choice: bring back the original too-human band with all their flaws, or build more efficient and obedient Metal Men.

The originals always returned. They were truly unique.

The feature was said to have outsold industry leader *Superman*, percentage-wise, although not in actual copies sold.

"The *New York Times* financial section ran an article speculating on the Metal Men being the successors to Superman," Kanigher claimed.

The clamor to give the Metal Men their own title was impossible to ignore. The first true issue of *Metal Men* was released in February, 1963—one year after their dramatic debut. "Rain of the Missile Men" concerned an alien robot king who sent a storm of duplicates of himself to Earth. Object: capture Tina and make her his queen.

The transition from *Showcase* to its own book was gradual. The stories took on a lighter tone. Andru drew more comically, while Esposito's gritty inks grew more open and less dark.

"What happened was at the time we did the first ones, it was a strong adventure book," says Esposito. "It was more science fiction. We weren't sure where we were going with it. But then Bob and Ross suddenly realized the humor in it, and we gave it a lighter touch. As Bob Kanigher became more satirical, automatically you can't have Clark Gable playing Lou Costello's role. You usually change the look to fit the script."

As a consequence, the dramatic approach that had been so arresting in their debut story soon became an empty cliché. Facing each new unstoppable foe, the Metal Men would hurl themselves against it, only to be melted, smelted and reduced to sad piles of slag. Each time, Dr. Magnus dutifully remade them as good as new. And once more, they flung themselves faithfully toward certain doom to save humanity. Somehow, the first recyclable heroes in comics managed to remain engaging.

"The strip was really before its time," Esposito said. "The characters were so well drawn…every personality came through in Bob's writing and Ross' design. There was a realness in them, but with a light touch. There was a society within the group that was just as uncontrollable as real society. The believability…the Metal Men *had* it. It went on its own and took off until Bob Kanigher started running out of ideas and he was going crazy after a while."

"I wrote Metal Men free hand, free mind," admitted Kanigher. "I was winging it. No plotting. You had to be completely free, you have to be completely uninhibited to do it."

One innovation that Kanigher pioneered in *Metal Men* was to let storylines spill over several issues. Not continued stories exactly, but instead a kind of loose continuity of character and subplot Marvel was just starting to experiment with. At staid old DC, this was unheard-of.

In fact, the rambunctious Metal Men debuted only three issues after the similarly-feisty Fantastic Four began to transform the sleepy comic book landscape.

Showcase #40 (Sep/Oct 1962).

"During that period of comic book sales," Esposito remembered, "they were dead. Until Marvel came in. And Stan Lee got lucky with Jack Kirby, finding a formula similar to what DC was doing in the *Metal Men*. We still don't know which came first, *Fantastic Four* or *Metal Men*. I think Bob Kanigher was clued. I think Bob saw where Marvel was going and he suddenly decided to go in that direction. And it caught on. That Marvel style of writing caught on like crazy. Bob was a genius in what he did."

Doc Magnus was forever trying to reinvent a version of Platinum that wasn't in love with him. Many times he attempted to give her to a museum without success. Tina once invented a robot Doc Magnus for her own mate. It was a quirky, but doomed relationship.

"But she had a bad habit of falling in love with Doc Magnus because her responsometer was screwed up and he had to operate on her constantly," recalled Esposito. "He wanted to kill her a couple of times, destroy her. In fact one cover I did she's on the operating table and he's trying to change her problems and all the guys are hanging around the operating table with tears in their eyes."

In *Metal Men* #13, Tin created a female version of himself from a do-it-yourself robot kit. Dubbed Nameless, she never did get an official name, nor did she ever seem to fit into the original band. In the meantime, the Metal Men battled a host of mechanical villains ranging from the Gas Gang to a terrorist robot group called B.O.L.T.S.

"Kanigher wrote it all very tongue in cheek," Esposito noted. "He used humor and saturated it. He made it bizarre and it worked. Then he was going that way with Metal Men and he was getting a little crazy. He didn't know what to do anymore. He was a damn good writer. He did things that were very good before he burned himself out with Metal Men and Wonder Woman."

The fine line between humor and self-parody began to blur. While their first recurring villain, Chemo, kept reappearing, more menacing than ever, newer opponents like Dr. Yes, the Sizzler and the Plastic Perils, were exaggerated and outrageous.

"I did a Metal Men in which they went to a land of robots, ruled, I think, by Robot Giantesses," Kanigher once said. "And they hold in subjugation robot dogs. One of the Metal Men said, 'Why don't you stand on your feet?' And when the dogs stood on their hind legs they

METAL MEN
YES—THE UNPREDICTABLE PLATINUM ROBOT SPEAKS FOR ALL THE METAL MEN AND THEIR INVENTOR, AS THEY BATTLE TO RAISE THEIR BATTERED FORMS...
--THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN -- AND DOGS!
THAT SPEECH WON'T SAVE YOU FROM YOUR DOOM! HARREEE--!
BUT, TINA'S DEFIANT WORDS FLY LIKE SPARKS INTO DRY LEAVES...
YOU HEARD THAT ROBOT! IF SHE AND HER BAND CAN DO IT--WHY CAN'T WE? WE WANT TO BE TREATED AS MEN--BUT WE NEVER WILL BE UNLESS WE GET OFF ALL FOURS! STAND UP! NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS! STAND UP!
BUT--WE'VE NEVER STOOD UP! WE CAN'T!
HOW DO YOU KNOW--UNTIL YOU'VE TRIED!
STAND UP!
STAND UP!
KLING
KRUNG
BEFORE THE EYES OF THE BATTERED METAL MEN--AN ASTONISHING BATTLE OF MECHANICAL BEINGS RAGES...
BETTER TO BE DISINTEGRATED ON YOUR FEET--THAN BE LEASHED ON YOUR KNEES! STAND UP AND FIGHT!
FIGHT!
FOOLS!--FOOLS!--ON YOUR KNEES AGAIN--BEFORE WE BLAST YOU!
BLANG
KLANGG!
BLANG
KLANGG

"Stand up!" For robots to be more than metal, they had to stand like men. From **Metal Men** #5.

became men. They *were* men. So, what is foolish? Someone in pajamas flying through the sky, or diving through stone walls, or racing around the world and meeting himself? But what could be less silly and more human than Tin, who considered himself the lowliest of the metal group? I hardly call that a foolish concept."

This story, "Menace of Mammoth Robots," in *Metal Men* #5, is probably the point where the series began to slip. Soon, the Metal Men were being turned into an animated bracelet, recast into a revolver with which a giant Doc Magus was being forced to shoot himself while under the hypnotic influence of the Solar-Brain, and devoured by a mechanical Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Kanigher kept recycling the plot to "Rain of the Missile Men." In one story, Tin is lured into becoming the king to an alien tin robots' queen. In another, a spider robot queen tries to make Doc Magnus her consort. The ultimate indignity came in "Birthday Cake for a Cannibal Robot" where the Metal Men served as cake decorations for a hungry B.O.L.T.S robot.

Despite the departure from dark drama, Metal Men continued to sell.

"Andru and Esposito were the perfect team," Kanigher observed. "The Metal Men was probably the most ingenious artwork that was ever done in comics. Ross's interpretation…was outstanding. No one has come within light years of him. He imbued them with an uncanny humanity."

"He could solve problems visually that no other artist could do," added Esposito. "There were prettier artists. His stuff may have been crude and sometimes difficult to work over, but the guy had a concept for storytelling. We were top dog on that book, and we did it for a long time, almost ten years."

"I enjoyed the Metal Men," Andru allowed. "I have to admit that. But I'd say that about the first year or two I was more caught up in the novelty of the idea. As time wore on, the characters became predictable. It was one of the first *real* attempts at characterization…an incredible amount of characterization through the metals. I guess it got to where it couldn't go anywhere with those limitations. Not only that, but I found it painful to work with so many figures, very often in one panel. You had the problem of clarity, and maintaining visual interest."

"Metal Men got to a point where Ross walked away from it," revealed Esposito. "He said, 'I can't stand these stories anymore. I don't want to do them.' Ross was the kind of guy that if he didn't enjoy the script he wouldn't get into it. He was like, 'I'm prostituting myself. I'm doing garbage. I want to do what I think is good. If it's good I'll break my back to do it.' That's the way Ross was to his dying day.

"Finally, when we pulled out, Mike Sekowsky did a couple, and I did a couple with Mike, and Gil Kane did one or two and I inked them. I couldn't do it like Ross would do because his style was completely different. It was more lyrical. Ross was more jumpy, harder looking. Gil was fluid, but Bob loved it. And the transition from Ross and me to me and Gil Kane did not bother the sales at all."

Kanigher saw it differently. "It went downhill when I left," he said frankly. "They tried to do things with it they should never have done. Because they don't know what's in my mind."

For, once Andru had departed, Kanigher began stepping away from his grand creations. One of the creative team's last collaborations was a retelling of the original story in issue #27. It was as if, after five years of going around in plot circles, Kanigher had nowhere else to go but back to the beginning.

In the midst of this transition, Kanigher resigned as a DC editor. The reason cited was a nervous breakdown.

The last days of the Metal Men were chaotic. They became fugitives, and adopted human identities on the run. Doc Magnus became a villain while the Metal Men worked for a mysterious benefactor named Mr. Conan. Without Kanigher and Andru, the metallic band was scrambling aimlessly for a new direction.

"When Bob Kanigher created that," Esposito reflects, "I said to Ross: 'He should make a syndicated strip out of this. This is perfect for continuity.' There wasn't anything for Sci-Fi in those days in the '60s. I told that to Bob, but he sort of fluffed it off. He didn't believe in it to be something like that. I think deep down inside he did, because he really got upset when other writers took it over and it started going downhill."

Privately, Kanigher used to tell fellow DC employees that the idea had been originally conceived as a newspaper strip. It's hard to reconcile that with his official account given during several interviews. But like the "impossible stories" he used to write for *Wonder Woman*, it was just like Robert Kanigher to bend reality in telling his own story.

Above, Albertus Magnus; below,the Golem.

I AM GOLD! SYMBOL: AU, FOR AURUM! ATOMIC NO. 79! ATOMIC WEIGHT 197.2! I MELT AT 1063 DEGREES CENTIGRADE! AN OUNCE OF ME CAN BE DRAWN INTO A WIRE 50 MILES LONG! OR HAMMERED INTO A SHEET 4 MILLIONTHS OF AN INCH THIN! ANYBODY HERE TOP THAT?
THAT'S NOT MY SPECIALTY, GOLD! I'M LEAD! I'M USED AS A SHIELD AGAINST HARMFUL RAYS--INCLUDING RADIATION! WHAT'S YOUR SPECIALTY, BUSTER?
MUSCLE! PLENTY OF MUSCLE! I'M IRON! IF YOU WANT ANYTHING DONE--ASK ME! I'VE BEEN AROUND! I'VE TRAVELED TO EARTH IN METEORITES! WHO ARE YOU, SKINNY?
MAYBE YOU'VE TRAVELED THROUGH SPACE, IRON--BUT IT'S EVIDENT YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A THERMOMETER! OR YOU'D KNOW I'M MERCURY! THE ONLY METAL THAT'S LIQUID AT ROOM TEMPERATURE! I REACT TO TEMPERATURE CHANGES LIKE A HOT ROD! I'M FULL OF STEAM! I'M DYNAMITE! I'M--
WON'T ANYBODY ASK WHO I AM? ANYBODY?... NO...? WELL--I--I'M TIN--T-I-N! I'M SOFTER THAN ZINC, B-B-BUT HARDER THAN LEAD! N-N-NO OFFENSE MEANT, MISTER LEAD! I TURN TO POWDER AT 200 DEGREES CENTI-GRADE--BUT I'LL DO MY BEST TO BE WORTHY OF YOU ALL--IF YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE?

Tina and Doc Magnus, and the other Metal Men; panels from the first appearance, **Showcase** #37.

Metal Men ceased publication at the end of 1969. In the years since, there have been sporadic attempts to revive the series by talents like Walt Simonson, Joe Staton and Dan Jurgens. All petered out within a short time.

"No one can equal the originator," insisted Kanigher. "The Metal Men revival written by someone else was another proof. It simply wasn't authentic and the readers know it. Even if they never read the original, instinctively they knew that something was missing. The element that made it successful. The original creator's touch."

Kanigher was undoubtedly correct. He himself scripted a four-part *Metal Men* mini-series in 1982, "Metal Men—The Movie." A second mini-series, "Do You Love Your Robot Today?" was to have been drawn by Irv Novick back in 1986.

"In one sequence," Kanigher revealed before his death in 2002, "Tina wanted a new dress so she could attract the inventor. So I have Gold pull out two of his back teeth—solid gold—and sell it to buy her a dress. You see, those are what they call Kanigher touches, because they're real. It's possible."

But neither project ever got past the planning stage. Perhaps without Andru and Esposito, it was just as well.

The unique magic of the Metal Men might be explained by a mystical comment Kanigher made many years later: "You see, I believe that there's no such thing as an inanimate object. Everything has a soul. A tree, a rock...even a piece of metal."

Then there's the Jewish legend of the Golem. Centuries ago in Prague the Great Rabbi Loew, seeing how hard people had to work just to subsist, turned to a Hebrew mystical book, the Kabbala, and discovered a recipe for transmuting an idol of clay into a fully functioning manlike servitor.

Building a giant out of common clay, Rabbi Loew performed the correct Kabbalistic ritual. By painting the activation word *emet* ("truth") on its clay brow, the Golem came to life and took up the duty of protecting the Jews of Prague. In one account, he turned evil and Rabbi Leow deactivated and destroyed him. According to another, the inert Golem lies hidden in a Czech temple attic to this day.

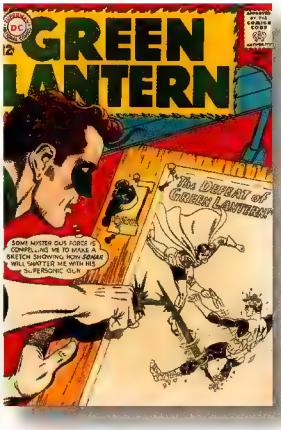
The Golem was one of the earliest robots in myth and legend. Although the 13th Century Prague Golem was the most famous, others had been written about centuries before.

Robert Kanigher never cited the Golem legend in his accounts of creating the Metal Men, but the parallels are plain to see. Except, rather

[continued on page 76]

How the JEWS Transformed the Comic Book INDUSTRY

Part II: The Silver Age (1956-1978)



THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
AT LAST!!! the FANTASTIC FOUR meet THE HULK!
THE HULK'S NEARBY! I CAN FEEL IT!
ANOTHER SECOND AND I'LL DESTROY THEM ALL!!
A BOOK-LENGTH EPIC!! NEED WE SAY MORE?!!

X-MEN
Featuring THE RETURN OF THE DREADED MAGNETO!
AT LAST!!! THE X-MEN COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS!
X-MEN! THE MOST UNUSUAL TEEN-AGERS OF ALL TIME!

by Arie Kaplan

By the mid-'50s, the comic book industry was in a sorry state. Allegations that the genre was promoting juvenile delinquency and illiteracy had "done in" the popular and groundbreaking horror and crime comics, and superheroes were now bland incarnations of their former selves. Batman, once a shadowy figure of the night, was recast as a high-camp boy scout battling rainbow-colored monsters. Superman, once the nemesis of corrupt politicians and foreign dictators, now embarked on such silly misadventures as keeping himself whole after being split in two (Superman Red and Superman Blue). And Wonder Woman, once a model of female empowerment, now required an escort—her boyfriend Colonel Steve Trevor—to satisfy critics the likes of Dr. Frederick Wertham, who'd suggested she was a closeted lesbian.

DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz.

The comic that launched the Silver Age, *Showcase* #4 (DC, September-October 1956). Pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Joe Kubert.

SUPERMAN
DC
NATIONAL COMICS
10¢
GREEN LANTERN
OCT.
NO. 8
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE EYE-BLAST FROM THAT GIGANTIC GILA MONSTER IS NULLIFYING MY POWER BEAM! THAT MEANS I'M POWERLESS TO STOP THIS LIZARD INVASION OF EARTH!
PRESENTING THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF STORIES WHICH WE CONFIDENTLY PREDICT WILL MAKE COMIC BOOK HISTORY!
"THE CHALLENGE from 5700 A.D.!"

Gil Kane and Jack Adler's beautifully rendered greytone cover for *Green Lantern* #8 (DC, September-October 1961).

Gil Kane

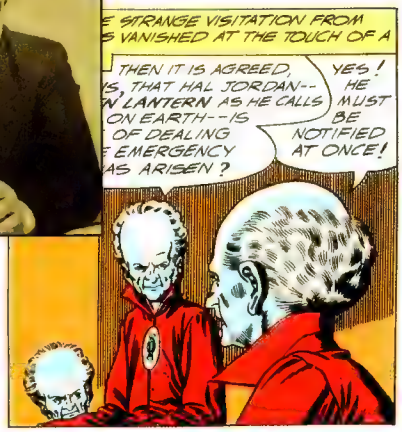
Desperate to revitalize sagging sales, DC began to revamp its second-string lineup of superheroes, such as Green Lantern (now test pilot Hal Jordan) and The Flash (aka police scientist Barry Allen). Editor Julius ("Julie") Schwartz, along with writer John Broome and cartoonist Gil Kane (born Eli Katz), introduced hundreds of new, identically costumed Green Lantern superheroes, each from a different planet, who patrolled the galaxy as part of an interplanetary peacekeeping force. The Green Lantern of Earth, Hal Jordan, was modeled on actor Paul Newman, and the Guardians of the Universe, little blue men who served as masters of the Green Lantern Corps, were designed by Kane to resemble Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion! Schwartz and his creative team also conceived a makeover for The Flash—a more modern crew cut and a sleeker costume—and Jewish writer Bob Kanigher cranked out more complex stories emphasizing The Flash's character development. Inaugurated in September-October 1956 in the pages of *Showcase* #4, the new Flash would herald the so-called "Silver Age" of comics: the first age in which comics weren't just for kids anymore.

Julius Schwartz, Robert Kanigher, and Carmine Infantino kick off the Silver Age of superheroes with The Flash.

But although these updated superheroes boosted sales for DC, the malaise gripping the industry persisted. Comic books needed a good punch in the jaw...and they were about to get it!

In 1961, Stan Lee (born Stanley Martin Lieber) was facing a career crisis. After twenty-one years in the business, the comic book writer, editor and production manager at the Goodman Publishing Company was tired of being perceived as being at "the bottom of the cultural totem pole." He aspired to be "a great writer, someday." It was time, Lee decided, to consider a career change.

But before he made his move,


E STRANGE VISITATION FROM
S VANISHED AT THE TOUCH OF A
THEN IT IS AGREED, IS, THAT HAL JORDAN-- N' LANTERN AS HE CALLS ON EARTH--IS OF DEALING E EMERGENCY AS ARISEN?
YES! HE MUST BE NOTIFIED AT ONCE!

ABOVE and RIGHT: Artist Gil Kane modeled the Guardians of the Universe after Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

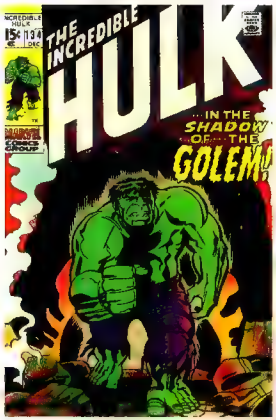
Kane modeled Hal (Green Lantern) Jordan after Hollywood actor Paul Newman.

IND.
THE Fantastic Four
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
1 NOV.
10¢
I--I CAN'T TURN INVISIBLE FAST ENOUGH!! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE, TORCH?
JUST WAIT AND SEE, SISTER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
FEATURING: "THE THING!" "MR. FANTASTIC!" "HUMAN TORCH!" "INVISIBLE GIRL!" TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
THE THREE OF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE! IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO TAKE A HAND!
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN ROPES TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION!

The Marvel Age of Superheroes explodes onto the scene with *The Fantastic Four* #1 (Marvel, November 1961). Pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Dick Ayers.

The Marvel Age

"When you think about it, The Incredible Hulk is a Golem."
–Stan Lee,
Referring to the medieval monster of Jewish lore



his boss Martin Goodman called Lee into his office and ordered him to come up with a new superhero concept that would outperform DC's *The Justice League of America* (which combined the revamped Flash and Green Lantern with mainstays like Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman to form a team of superheroes). Lee was incredulous. Sales of Superman, the gold standard of superheroes, had slumped for much of the 1950s. It would take a real-life superhero to truly revive the genre.

Lee consulted his wife, Joan, who advised him to take up Goodman's challenge. "Why not do comics the way you've always wanted to do them?" Lee remembers her saying. "After all, you're going to quit anyway."

Lee heeded her advice, and what happened next may have saved the comic book industry from extinction. In November 1961, he and Jewish artist/co-creator Jack Kirby unveiled *Fantastic Four* #1, a crime-fighting series with four heroes who exhibited complex human emotions and often fought with each other, a rarity in the usually chipper, ultra-friendly superhero world. Readers could empathize with such characters as Benjamin Grimm (who'd been transformed by cosmic rays into a monstrous pile of orange rocks) despite—or perhaps because of—their flaws. To his fellow superheroes, Ben could be a hotheaded jerk, but comics fans attributed Ben's bad temper to his being trapped in repulsive orange skin and empathized with him when he

Ben (Thing) Grimm became a metaphor for Jews and other minority outsiders who faced discrimination because of their skin color or ethnic roots.

Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott's masterful splash page to *Fantastic Four* #51 (Marvel, June 1966).

Daredevil #1 (Marvel, April 1964), pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Bill Everett.

Journey Into Mystery #83 (Marvel, August 1962), pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Joe Sinnott.

The Hulk is the comic book metaphor of the Golem of Prague.

was rejected by the attractive Sue (the FF superhero who could turn invisible). Like many Marvel characters, the emotionally challenged Ben became a metaphor for Jews and other minority outsiders who faced discrimination because of their skin color or ethnic roots.

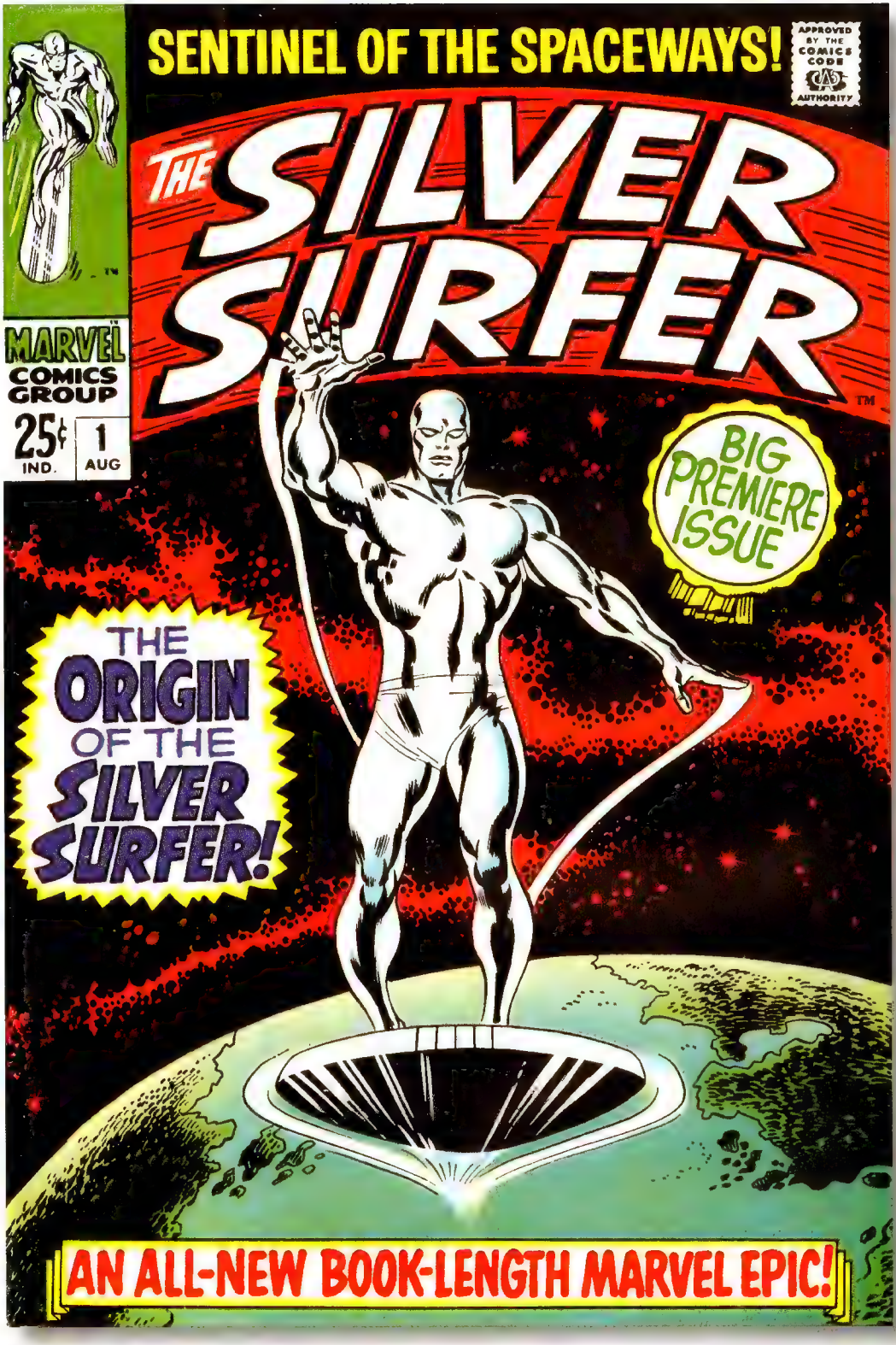
The Fantastic Four quickly built up a large readership, and Marvel Comics (as the Goodman line was renamed in 1963) soon introduced titles featuring physically challenged heroes, such as Daredevil (aka blind lawyer Matt Murdock) and Thor (aka crippled Doctor Don Blake). And thus began the Marvel Age of Comics, a subsection of the Silver Age that was marked by Lee and Kirby's brilliant nine-year collaboration. One of their early hits, The Incredible Hulk—a conflicted hero who could not control the rage swirling inside of him—had a metaphorical affinity to the legendary Golem of Prague, a monster who was both a powerful protector and a potential danger to everyone in his path.

Stan Lee was no longer thinking about leaving the comics world. He was too busy thinking up new superheroes—like Spider-Man.

Co-created by artist Steve Ditko, Spider-Man was the alter ego of teen science-geek Peter Parker, who'd been bitten by a radioactive spider

In 1964, Stan Lee created the blind superhero Daredevil, whose secret identity is attorney Matt Murdock.

Spider-Man Annual #1 (Marvel, 1964), art by Steve Ditko.

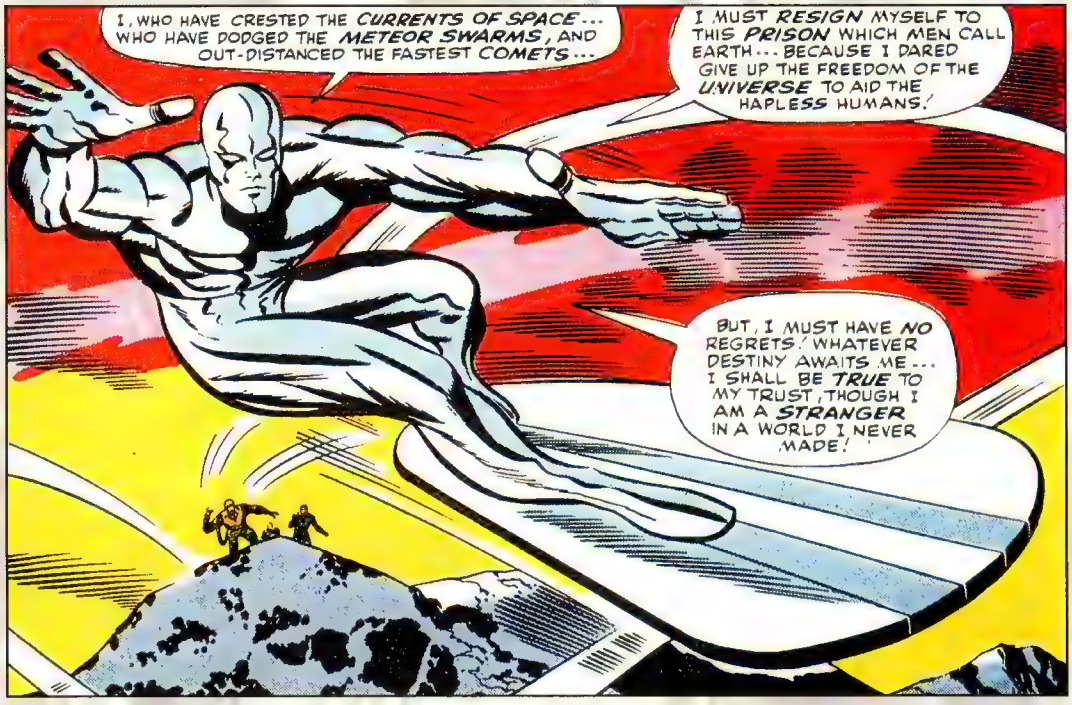


Silver Surfer #1 (Marvel, August 1968), art by John Buscema.

Courting the College Crowd

"I just thought, what if somebody from another planet who was a good guy came down here and saw the terrible things we're doing to our world and to each other?"

–Stan Lee, discussing the Silver Surger

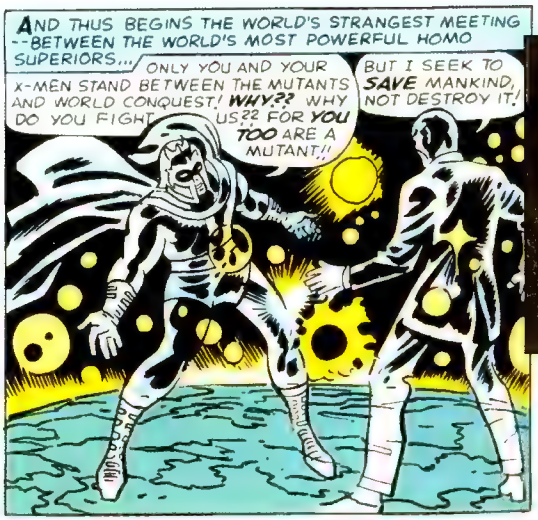

I, WHO HAVE CRESTED THE CURRENTS OF SPACE... WHO HAVE DODGED THE METEOR SWARMS, AND OUT-DISTANCED THE FASTEST COMETS...
I MUST RESIGN MYSELF TO THIS PRISON WHICH MEN CALL EARTH... BECAUSE I DARED GIVE UP THE FREEDOM OF THE UNIVERSE TO AID THE HAPLESS HUMANS!
BUT, I MUST HAVE NO REGRETS! WHATEVER DESTINY AWAITS ME... I SHALL BE TRUE TO MY TRUST, THOUGH I AM A STRANGER IN A WORLD I NEVER MADE!

and suddenly found himself endowed with super-strength, agility and the ability to scale Manhattan skyscrapers. Spider-Man was an instant hit; teenagers identified with this first-ever major teenage superhero, who pledged to use his powers for the betterment of humankind. Before Peter Parker had started wall-crawling, the only teens in comic books were comedic characters, like Archie Andrews of *Archie Comics* fame, or sidekicks, like Batman's Robin.

The Silver Surfer is released as Galactus's herald in *Fantastic Four* #49 (Marvel, April 1966). Art by Kirby and Sinnott.

The popularity of Marvel Comics among high school and college students gave Lee and Kirby the freedom to delve into more sophisticated philosophical, spiritual and moral themes. In *Fantastic Four* #48 (1966), for example, they introduced Galactus, an energy-imbibing alien giant who devours whole planets for sustenance, accompanied by his herald, the Silver Surfer, who scouts planets for his master to consume. The Silver Surfer selects Earth as his master's next meal, but after spending time here, he feels sympathy for Earthlings, whom he believes have the potential to act righteously, despite the many injustices they commit. Deciding to stay on Earth and help the Earthlings (a choice which relinquishes his freedom to roam the galaxy), he begs his master to look elsewhere. "I

Stan Lee comes face-to-face with his creation.


AND THUS BEGINS THE WORLD'S STRANGEST MEETING --BETWEEN THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL HOMO SUPERIORS...
ONLY YOU AND YOUR X-MEN STAND BETWEEN THE MUTANTS AND WORLD CONQUEST! WHY DO YOU FIGHT US?
WHY?? WHY FOR YOU TOO ARE A MUTANT!!
BUT I SEEK TO SAVE MANKIND, NOT DESTROY IT!

Professor X's battle against the militant mutant Magneto, a metaphor for the divergent ideologies of the nonviolent Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the militant Malcolm X.

and Marvel's sales soared.

The next major breakthrough for Marvel came in September 1963, when Lee and Kirby introduced The X-Men—a superhero team of five men and women born with an extra "mutant" gene that endowed each with a different super-power (telepathy, super-strength, flight and the ability to emit deadly optic blasts). From their base at Professor Charles Xavier's "School for Gifted Youngsters" in New York's Westchester County, the five set out to fight injustice. The X-Men was a hit among '60s college students, who may have seen in pacifist Professor X's battle against the militant mutant Magneto a metaphor for the divergent

wanted to tell a story with a biblical subtext that was part spiritual fable and part ecological morality tale," Lee says. "I wanted Silver Surfer to convey that we live in the Garden of Eden, on the most perfect planet possible, yet people are so blind, they don't realize it. Instead of enjoying it, we spend our time hating people who are different than we are, being greedy and avaricious, and committing crimes. I wondered, what if somebody from another planet came down and saw the human race—what would he think? What would he feel about us? And that's what I tried to do with the Silver Surfer."

Silver Surfer's debut in the '60s could not have been more timely. He quickly became an ecology icon among the youth of America's burgeoning counterculture,

Mutants and Metaphors

"Everything in comics, as in myths, is a hyperbolic metaphor."

–Jon Bogdanove

Openly Jewish, Openly Heroic

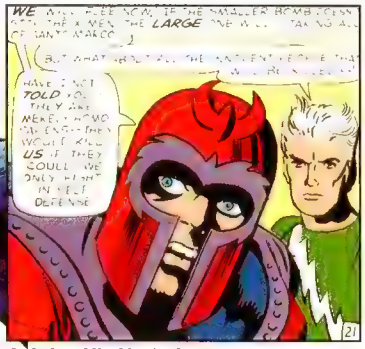
"At its foundation, The X-Men had to be a story of hope."

–writer Chris Claremont

ideologies of the nonviolent Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the militant Malcolm X. Whether in the minds of its Jewish creators The X-Men symbolized civil rights or, for that matter, the Jew as outsider is a matter of debate. But in the decade to come, after Stan Lee had left X-Men storytelling to others, one of the new Marvel staff writers would make the Jewish connection unmistakable.

By 1975, sales of *The X-Men* were falling fast. It was time, Marvel execs decided, to revitalize the series. Jewish comics writer Chris Claremont was picked for the job.

Claremont decided to rewrite the back-story of The X-Men's saga. "I was trying to figure out what made Magneto tick," says Claremont. "And I thought, what was the most transfiguring event of our century that would tie in the super-concept of The X-Men as persecuted outcasts? It *has* to be the Holocaust!" Claremont—who'd once lived for two months on a kibbutz in Israel, where he had met Holocaust survivors—eventually cast Magneto as a Holocaust survivor embittered by humanity's silence in the face of Nazi barbarity. He now had a complex villain with a motive. "And once I found that point of departure for Magneto," Claremont says, "all the rest fell into place, because it allowed me to turn him into a tragic figure who wants to save his people. Magneto was defined by all that had happened to him. So I could start from the premise that he was a good and decent man at heart. I then had the opportunity, over the course of 200 issues, to attempt to redeem him, to see if he could start over, if he could



A victim of Nazi barbarity, Magneto's behavior would be defined by the Holocaust.

Kitty Pryde's cover debut on *X-Men* #139 (Marvel, November 1980), pencils by John Byrne, inks by Terry Austin.

Jack Kirby launches the Fourth World, *The New Gods* #1 (DC, February-March 1971), art by Jack Kirby.

Kirby's Fourth World

"When I first saw Darth Vader, I thought, 'Oh, it's Doctor Doom!"

–Mark (Luke Skywalker) Hamill

THE STAR WARS SAGA CONTINUES
STAR WARS
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
MARK HAMILL · HARRISON FORD · CARRIE FISHER
BILLY DEE WILLIAMS · ANTHONY DANIELS
IRVIN KERSHNER · GARY KURTZ
LEIGH BRACKETT · LAWRENCE KASDAN · GEORGE LUCAS
GEORGE LUCAS · JOHN WILLIAMS
Coming to your galaxy this Summer

evolve in the way that Menachem Begin had evolved from a guy that the British considered 'Shoot on sight' in 1945—you know, 'you see him, you kill him! Don't bother about a trial'—to a statesman who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976."

Claremont also brought new strong female characters into the series. In *Uncanny X-Men* #129 (1979) he introduced Katherine "Kitty" Pryde, a young Jewish girl who possessed the mutant ability to walk through walls. Kitty, he says, was modeled after an Israeli teenager wearing a miniskirt and carrying an Uzi whom he'd seen one day while walking down a street in Tel Aviv. An immigrant from England, Claremont understood "what it's like to be different, and what it's like to be Jewish. So that became my window through which I could present The X-Men universe to a broader audience."

Jack Kirby

In 1970, Jack Kirby (Jacob Kurtzberg) shocked the comic book industry when he defected from Marvel and rejoined rival publisher DC. Simply put, he had felt unappreciated and unacknowledged for the many Marvel characters he'd helped to create.

It was at DC, where he served as editor, writer and penciler of his own line, that Kirby would imagine the Fourth World, an interlocking series of four monthly comic books titles—*The New Gods*, *The Forever People*, *Mister Miracle* and, for a time, *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*. The series featured typical comic book fare of the period—alien worlds, super-powered warriors, genetic experimentation—but much of its inspiration derived from a melding of classic Greek, Roman

***Forever People* #1 (DC, February-March 1971), pencils by Jack Kirby, inks by Vince Colletta.**

The pure power and brilliance of Kirby is displayed on this cover of *Mister Miracle* #6 (DC, February 1972).

and Norse mythology and contemporary history. In *Mister Miracle* #1 (Mar-Apr 1971), for example, Kirby introduced his escape-artist protagonist Scott Free, who as an infant was sent by his father, noble Highfather of the peaceful planet New Genesis, to the warlike planet Apokolips to be trained as a warrior. In exchange, Darkseid, the evil lord of Apokolips, sent his newborn son Orion to New Genesis to be trained as a peacemaker. The trade was supposed to seal a cease-fire agreement between the two planets, but because of Darkseid's treachery, the war only intensified.

The Fourth World, says Jewish writer/cartoonist Jon Bogdanove (*Alpha Flight*, *Power Pack*), is, in part, Jack Kirby's commentary on the Holocaust. "You have a '*fuehrer*' character, whose name is Darkseid (pronounced Darkside), but the 'seid' is spelled like a German word. And then there's the image of sooty Apokolips, with its open fire pits, which is evocative of the industrialized war machine of Nazi Germany. Armagetto (the slums of Apokolips whose wretchedly impoverished denizens were known as 'Hunger Dogs') was really about the ghettos in Poland and elsewhere. All these people who slave and die for Darkseid are subjected to dispiriting slogans, like 'Work Is Life, Death Is Freedom,' a clear allusion to the Nazi's 'Work Will Make You Free.' I think Kirby's experience as an American Jew fighting in World War II was particularly intense. It's not that Jack was in any way writing 'code' for his Jewish readers. He was just processing what was in his heart and head." Comparisons have been drawn between Kirby's creations and some of America's most critically acclaimed and financially successful science-fiction movies, such as George Lucas' *Star Wars* trilogy, "I'd be enormously surprised if George Lucas didn't read the Fourth World series," Bogdanove says. Both stories feature a character (Highfather in the Fourth World, Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*) who won't tell the hero the truth about his father. *Star Wars* has the Force; the Fourth World has the Source. Star Wars refers to the "dark side" of the Force; the Fourth World includes the character literally named "Darkseid." The *Star Wars* character Darth Vader also bears a striking resemblance to Kirby's Fantastic Four villain Doctor Doom, clad in cloak, prosthetic armor and iron mask. A more current film series influenced by Kirby's

The image of sooty Apokolips, with its open fire pits, which is evocative of the industrialized war machine of Nazi Germany. Armagetto (the slums of Apokolips whose wretchedly impoverished denizens were known as 'Hunger Dogs') was really about the ghettos in Poland and elsewhere.

THE FOREVER PEOPLE
52 BIG pages DON'T TAKE LESS ONLY 25¢
DC THE FOREVER PEOPLE
NO. 8
MAY
THE PRISONERS OF THE POWER!
PLUS SANDMAN in "DREAMS OF DOOM!"

The influence of Kirby's Dr. Doom on George Lucas's Darth Vader is striking.

oeuvre is the *Matrix* trilogy, in which the protagonist Neo journeys to the peaceful city of Zion (safe haven from tyrannical machines which have overtaken the world), much like the peaceful city of Supertown (safe haven from the tyrannical Darkseid) in the Fourth World's *Forever People* title. And as the *New York Times* film critic Elvis Mitchell recently wrote in an article discussing Kirby, Zion also bears a distinct resemblance to the Negative Zone, a "Netherworld" seen in the *Fantastic Four*. As Mitchell explains, "When Neo travels from the outer world of the Matrix to Zion, the world-within-worlds scenarios (like the Negative Zone) that Kirby pioneered in comics are visible."

While superhero comics were undergoing a revolution in character development—the happy, friendly characters of the Golden Age having been replaced with conflicted, dark ones—the burgeoning hippie countercultural or alternative newspapers such as *Yarrowstalks* and the *Chicago Mirror* began to showcase their own underground comic strips. These often sexually charged, sometimes drug-fueled, always edgy works featured the lives of young, anti-establishment types. If superheroes showed up at all, they were parodies.

Underground newspapers like *The Berkeley Barb* helped usher in a new "revolution" in comix art.

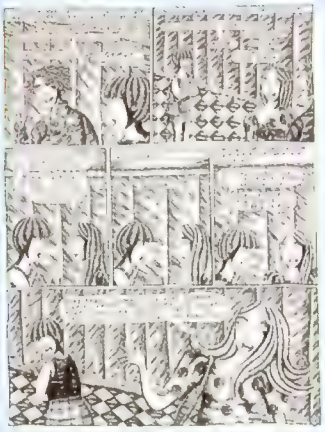
The new generation of underground comics creators—most of whom had grown up devouring Harvey Kurtzman's *MAD* and Will Eisner's *The Spirit*—took root in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco, where Diane Noomin and Trina Robbins, among others, drew cartoons for newspapers like the *Berkeley Barb* and the *San Francisco Oracle*; and in New York City, where newspapers like the *East Village Other* and *The Realist* featured the works of Jewish cartoonists Art Spiegelman and Sam Gross. The comic strips soon evolved into underground comic books ("comix"), published by such alternative presses as Ron Turner's Last Gasp, Denis Kitchen's Kitchen Sink Press, and Don Donahue's Apex Novelties. Given the books' "adult" content and graphics, they were sold in "head shops" alongside psychedelic posters and drug paraphernalia.

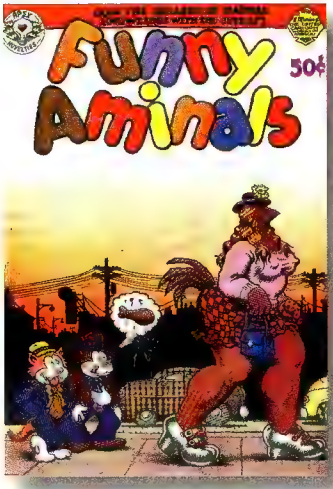
The alternative comix world also pioneered the rise of female comic

Meanwhile, in the Underground...

"You won't find women depicted either as fabulously attired avenging Amazonian goddesses or scantily clad silicone-injected damsels in distress. For that matter, you won't find men portrayed as heroic, hormonally imbalanced saviours, evil masterminds or rabid, sex-crazed perverts."

–Diane Noomin, in the foreword to her underground cartoonists anthology Twisted Sisters Volume 2: Drawing the Line (1995)

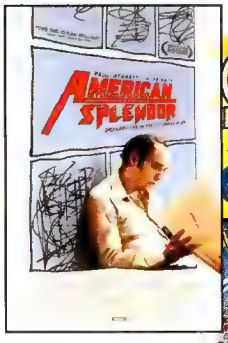




Funny Aminals #1 (Apex Novelties, 1972) featured the debut of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

book writers and artists. In 1970, Last Gasp's *It Ain't Me, Babe* became the first comic book to be published with an all-female editorial and creative staff. One of its popular strips was written by a Jewish woman—Diane Noomin—about DiDi Glitz, a character who parodied the postmodern Jewish American Princess stereotype. Aline Kominsky, the future wife of legendary cartoonist Robert Crumb, soon followed with her own autobiographical underground comic strip, "Love That Bunch," in which she detailed her adventures as a self-proclaimed sex-crazed Jewish neurotic. Trina Robbins, daughter of a Yiddish newspaper journalist, moved the Jewish women's experience into political terrain with her commemoration of the deadly Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, presenting it in comic book form in *Lilith*, the Jewish feminist magazine.

Another comix innovation of the early '70s was the publication of Art Spiegelman's three-page version of "Maus," about his father's Holocaust experience—the villainous Germans depicted as cats and their Jewish victims as mice—in a 1972 edition of the alternative comic book *Funny Aminals* (misspelling intentional). Spiegelman would later expand "Maus" into a best-selling graphic novel, but at this stage of the 24-year-old's career he was busy editing his revolutionary underground comix magazine *Arcade*, which featured stories



Harvey Pekar's self-published *American Splendor* #1 (Harvey Pekar, 1976), weaved true-to-life stories of the "everyman." It was eventually adapted into a critically acclaimed film in 2003.

by fellow Jewish writers and cartoonists. In her trademark primitivist style, Diane Noomin created brutally confessional comic strips about her awkward childhood; through her *Blabette Yakowitz* comic strips, Aline Kominsky deftly lampooned the nosy, matronly "yentas" she'd grown up with in suburban Long Island.

By 1972, the underground comix market had gone into a tailspin, a victim of changing tastes and the precarious state of head shops, which everywhere faced closure by the authorities. *Arcade* would last a few more years, and publishers like Last Gasp several more decades, but the first wave of underground comix were history.

There were a few exceptions—and one of them was *American Splendor*, the self-published comic book series by Harvey Pekar, a homely Jewish file clerk in Cleveland who imagined that his "everyman" trials and tribulations might have a certain appeal. Impressed by the concept, Pekar's longtime friend, underground comix artist Robert Crumb, made an exception to his policy of drawing only his own work

Arcade #1 (The Print Mint Inc, Spring 1975).

The Splendor of Being an Ordinary American

"Serious readers have never, for the most part, looked to comics for good literature because, in fact, there are so few good comics that are well-written."

–Harvey Pekar

From Novel Graphics to Graphic Novels

"In the years since A Contract With God has been published, the book has been translated into six languages, including, appropriately, Yiddish–a language in which I can think but cannot read or write."

–Will Eisner

and illustrated many of Pekar's true-to-life tales (Pekar could draw only stick figures)—including when Harvey's wife-to-be announced on their first date that they should forget about the courtship and just get married. *American Splendor* would also feature such Jewish themes and characters as the Jewish rag peddlers of 1920s New York (delineated lovingly in the strip "Pa-ayper Reggs," illustrated by Crumb) and "Rabbi's Vife" (illustrated by Jewish cartoonist Drew Friedman), about an elderly Viennese Jewish doctor whose poor joke-telling skills so annoyed Pekar that he decided to taunt the physician. Prior to the release of the critically acclaimed 2003 film version (starring actor Paul Giamatti as Pekar as well as Pekar himself) *American Splendor* was known by only a select few: working-class readers, intellectuals sick of superheroes and cultural critics. Nevertheless, Pekar's influence was far-reaching. His poignant portrayals of the kinds of people we encounter in our daily lives added a whole new dimension to the comic book as a medium of serious social criticism.

A milestone in the evolution of the comic book was reached in 1978 with the publication of the first graphic novel: Will Eisner's *A Contract With God*. The creator of The Spirit in the 1940s and 1950s had been rediscovered by the emergence in the 1970s of comic book specialty stores, that sold only comic books and related merchandise, and comic book conventions nationwide. Thus did a new generation encounter Will Eisner, and they were clamoring for more.

Eisner's answer was a total departure from his earlier emphasis on superheroes. Ever since 1938, inspired by the woodcut novels of artist Lynd Ward, Eisner had toyed with the idea of developing a serious work in comics form. At that time, however, such an idea would have been derided by publishers, who considered comics "for children only." In the 1950s Eisner would begin sketching out ideas for a more serious comics work, but it wasn't until 1978, after mature underground comix had garnered critical respect, that he completed his "narrative that deal(t) with intimate themes." Utilizing a new, experimental storytelling medium which he dubbed "graphic novel," Eisner recounted, in vignettes, tenement life in the Bronx of his youth. In the title story, "A Contract With God," protagonist Frimme Hersh, a pious Jewish man who had carved on a stone tablet a "contract with God," to which he attributes his lifelong lucky streak (he had been told early on in life that "God will reward you" for acts of kindness), is furious at God for allowing his young daughter Rachele to die of a sudden illness. Accusing God of "violat(ing) our contract!" Frimme disavows the contract and, with it, his faith. A now hardened and miserly Frimme seals his own fate.

An image from Will Eisner's graphic novel *A Contract With God*.

A Contract With God offered readers a rich meditation on the eternal question posed in the Book of Job—"Why do bad things happen to good people?"—and the comics press responded with glowing reviews. The media soon picked up on the term "graphic novel" to describe novel-length works of "sequential art" (Eisner's alternate term for comics), and in the years to come other cartoonists wishing to create mature works would try their hands at this new form (Jason Lutes's *Jar of Fools*, Joe Kubert's *Fax From Sarajevo* and Art Speigelman's *MAUS*).

If the comics industry of the 1950s ended with a hiccup, the '60s began with a roar, as the powerhouse Jewish writer/artist team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby revolutionized the industry by creating more complex, dark and conflicted heroes—and thus widened the comics market from "kids only" to readers of all ages. The late '60s and early '70s saw the rise and fall of an underground comix revolution spawned in large part by Jews who brushed aside the metaphorical masks of their predecessors and portrayed openly Jewish characters. And by the decade's close, Will Eisner had taken the comic book to a new level with the invention of the graphic novel.

Thus ended the Silver Age of comics. The stage was now set for the next new development: the independent comics boom.

Arie Kaplan is a writer for MAD *magazine. He has also written for* Entertainment Weekly, Teen Beat, Time Out New York, *and the MTV series* Total Request Live.

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"One of the few cover-featured femme fatales in the pulps, a playgirl avenger with a mask, an hourglass figure, a loaded pistol, and a black-widow attitude. How many comics manhunters did she spawn? How high can you count?"

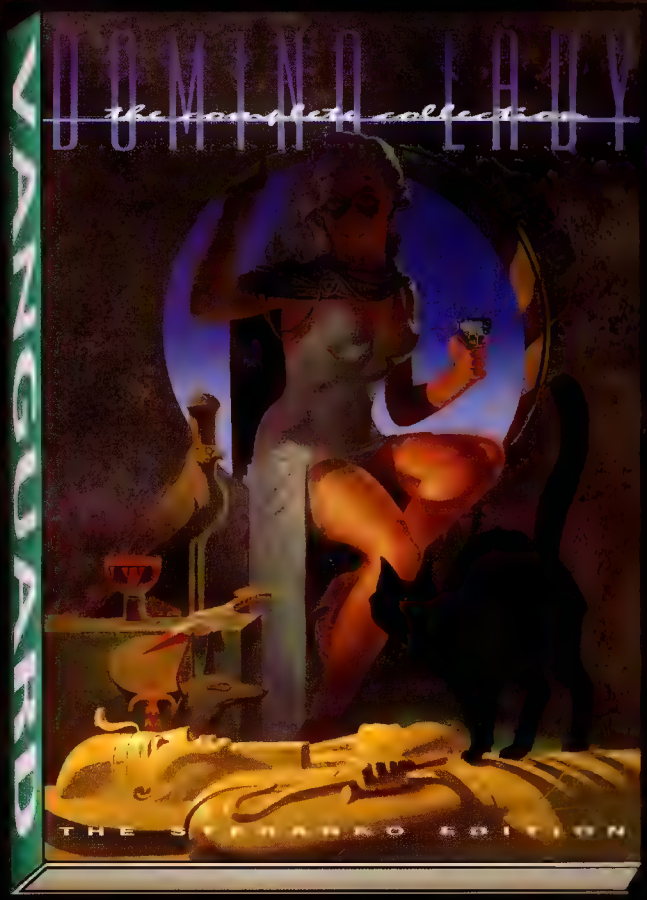
Regarding his work on *Indiana Jones*, Steranko remarked: "Indy is squarely in the pulp tradition. I called up the heroic presence, the tension-packed atmosphere, the colorful backgrounds, and the split-second action that typified the pulps—plus the Saturday afternoon serials, which essentially were pulps on film."

STERANKO AROUSES THE DOMINO LADY!

Interview conducted by Bill Baker for *CBM*

Special thanks to J. David Spurlock of Vanguard Productions

The comics creator known as Steranko really needs no introduction to the readers of this magazine, much less to readers possessing even a passing interest in those truly innovative, influential and utterly revolutionary figures of the past hundred years who work in the graphic, narrative, or pop arts. As the author of Steranko's History of Comics *[which has sold somewhere in the vicinity of a quarter million copies and counting!] and the auteur behind perennially popular runs on* Captain America, Strange Tales *and* Nick Fury, Agent of Shield, *his place among the elite of comic historians as well as within the Pantheon of "Comic Gods"—those creators universally revered by comic book fans as much for their legacies as for their bodies of work and their impact on the medium—was assured at an age when the majority of folks are still trying to decide what they'd like to do with their lives. All the work he's done over the three-plus decades since then, including such gems as* Noir, *Vanguard's beautiful edition of the catalogue for Steranko's one man art show that ran a few years back overseas, and a string of now-iconic images of The Shadow for a series of paperback reprints of that seminal pulp, have only added to his status. All of which leads nicely to his latest endeavor, wherein...*



STERANKO AROUSES THE DOMINO LADY!

Bill Baker: The pulps were pretty much forgotten before you wrote about them in your initial volume of *The History of Comics*. You were the first historian to connect pulps with comics, showing that they preceded the four-color format and had the same publishers, writers, artists and editors. What do we owe them today?

Steranko: Their tradition. The pulps provided the seminal icons in American pop literature. Batman is the comics' version of The Shadow and almost identical to the pulps' Black Bat. Superman is part Iron Monro, part

Steranko's rendition of Doc Savage, *City of Bronze* (1990).

Hugo Danner of *Gladiator*, and a few other direct influences from the pulps, including Doc Savage, who was described in an early ad as a "superman." Tarzan, Zorro, the Avenger, Conan, Phantom Detective and John Carter of Mars were all spawned in the pulps.

Yesterday's comics obviously took their cues from the pulps. Today's comics take their cues from films, but, however you correlate it, the source of heroic fiction traces directly to pulp fiction. Spider-Man links to The Spider. Arnold Schwarzenegger action flicks dupe Jim Anthony adventures. Bruce Willis' McClain reincarnates Nick Carter. James Bond treads the same paths as Operator 5 and Secret Agent X. Darkman recasts The Shadow. Han Solo bears a bona fide resemblance to Captain Future. Indiana Jones follows the Doc Savage tradition. The beat goes on...

The influence of the pulps has influenced Steranko's entire career. Shown above, *Mad Electrons* from the bookcover *The Shadow: The Silent Death* 1978.

Baker: Did your pulp experience help when George Lucas and Steven Spielberg asked you to visualize Indiana Jones in a series of production paintings two years before the film was made?

Steranko: Of course, Indy is squarely in the pulp tradition. I called up the heroic presence, the tension-packed atmosphere, the colorful backgrounds, and the split-second action that typified the pulps—plus the Saturday afternoon serials, which essentially were pulps on film.

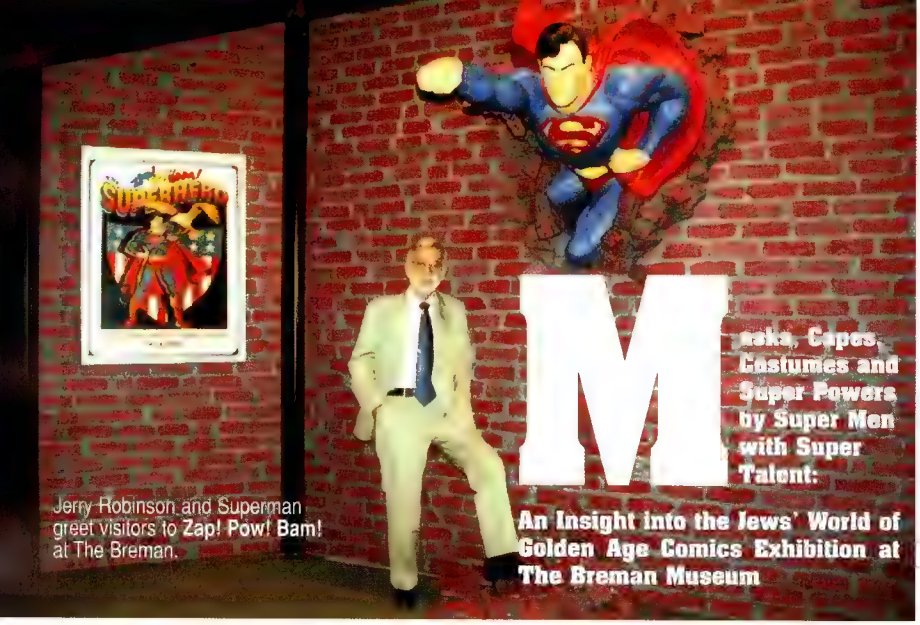
Baker: What attracted you to the pulp format?

Steranko: I first discovered pulp characters—The Shadow and Nick Carter—on the radio when I was about seven years old. They were both broadcast on New York's WOR on Sunday afternoon. When I was about ten, I discovered pulps in used magazine shops and was intrigued by the promise of fantastic adventure under their vivid, action-packed covers. I still have a great affection for the form and, over the years, have come to realize how well they were generally written, even though they conformed to specific editorial formulas. Pulpsmiths were extraordinary craftsmen—and fast, at a penny a word!

Baker: Beyond their sheer escapist value, did they inform your life or viewpoint in any appreciable way?

Steranko: Pulps were more accessible than other forms of entertainment. Television had not yet replaced radio as the entertainment centerpiece in homes when I was a kid. Saturday matinee movies were always special—that's where my storytelling education began. Comics and pulps were commonplace and I was voracious—I started reading at about a year and a half old and, in my childhood years, would entertain myself for hours with magazines and books. Film, however, informed my early life much more than any other medium.

Continued on page 66



Jerry Robinson and Superman greet visitors to **Zap! Pow! Bam!** at The Breman.

Masks, Capes, Costumes and Super Powers by Super Men with Super Talent:

An Insight into the Jews' World of Golden Age Comics Exhibition at The Breman Museum

Superman phone booth (phone would ring—answer it and pretend to change into Superman!).

Exhibition displays: Cover art to **Action Comics** by Fred [illegible] **Master Comics** #22 by Mac Rabb[illegible] splash "Whirlwind" by Bernie Klein from **Daredevil** #3, "hand-colored" splash "Bombshell, Son of War" by Mort Meskin from **Boy Comics**.

Comics #78 by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, "hand-colored" splash "London" by Jerry Robinson from **Daredevil** #5 cover re-creation **Captain America** #1 by Joe Simon (1999).

by Keif A. Fromm

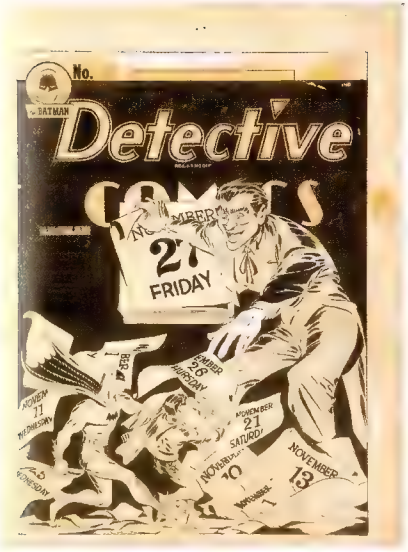
The years 1938 and 1939 were not years that many adults would remember fondly. Besides our country still reeling from the Depression, the people of our great nation now feared prejudice and ridicule by Nazi and Communist sympathizers who would be quite content to see the U.S.A. ultimately go to war in Europe and Asia.

On the other hand though, if you were a child growing up in 1938 and 1939 your impression of the world around you was probably not as bleak. After all, The Shadow and The Green Hornet were two of the top-rated radio programs amongst kids. Spanky, Alfalfa, Darla and the rest of the "Our Gang" crew kept kids laughing long after their adventures were over and it was time to go home for dinner.

Let's not forget the great and wondrous 1939 New York World's Fair either. Here an imaginative child could feast all of his senses on delectable foods to satisfy every taste bud, while trying at the same time to experience every marvelous invention that only Buck Rogers was thought to possess.

If you were truly a child of imagination who craved flights of fancy to distant planets or as an avenger against all that was evil in the world, then 1938 and 1939 were magical and

The gift shop at The Breman customized for **ZAP! POW! BAM!**



Exterior of The [illegible]

was certainly the perfect year for the kid who discovered *Detective Comics* #27. This comic introduced kids to the core-opposite costumed hero that Superman was. All young Jewish boys from the greater Tri-State area as well, artists Jerry Robinson and Sheldon Moldoff with writer Bill Finger would assist Bob Kane with breathing life into the tortured and troubled soul known as The Batman.

Whether you were Jacob Kurtzberg who chose to Anglicize his name to Jack Kirby or Emanuel "Mac" Raboy who chose not to identify with any religion at all, regardless of anyone's personal state of Judaism during this period one thing was quite apparent during the comic industry's infancy; those individuals that were chiefly responsible for the artistic vision, literary imagery and profound business sense to create a new entertainment medium that would spawn movies, television and licensing bonanzas galore were all Jews.

Entitled "Zap! Pow! Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comics, 1938-1950," The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta,

Jerry Robinson poses between his original comic cover art to **Detective Comics** #67 and (shown above) **Detective Comics** #71. (both Collection of Jerry Robinson)

treasured years that only a child could remember as simply "timeless."

You see, 1938 was the year that introduced countless children to a bold and selfless crusader in red and blue tights and a cape by the name of Superman. It was in *Action Comics* #1 that two young Jewish boys from Ohio—writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster—would bring life to comic's first real costumed super-hero.

If you preferred a hero who was more dark, ominous and foreboding, then 1939

Exhibition Curator and Joker creator Jerry Robinson poses beside his original "hand-colored" splash page art to "London" from **Daredevil** #2 (Aug 1942, Lev Gleason Publications).

he drawing table of Superman co-creator Joe Shuster pictured alongside the typewriter (detail, inset) of Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel.

Joanne Siegel (widow) and Laura Siegel (daughter) pictured with Jerry Siegel's typewriter.

Display (detail, above) includes a vintage photo of Joanne Siegel (who was the original model for Lois Lane) and glasses belonging to Jerry Siegel (left) and Joe Shuster (right).

Georgia will tell the story in "words and pictures" of the comic industry's great Jewish pioneers.

The Breman's Archivist, Sandra Berman, helps guide us through this glorious Four-Color Universe known as The Golden Age of Comics.

Keif A. Fromm: Can you give me a history of how and when "Zap!, Pow!, Bam!" was envisioned?

Sandra Berman: Several years ago The Breman curated a highly successful exhibition on Maurice Sendak. Following its close, the museum was looking for another topic that would appeal to both adults and children. The Breman's Director, Jane Leavey, having just read Michael Chabon's *Cavalier and Clay*, suggested we begin looking at the Jewish involvement in comic books. She gave me the task of beginning the research and asked me to develop the concept.

Fromm: What kinds of people do you feel this exhibition will draw?

Berman: The exhibition will appeal to adults, teens and children. Anyone who has at one time turned the pages of a comic book, or enjoyed the exploits of comic book characters at the movies and on television.

Fromm: Did you know very much about the comics medium prior to working on this exhibition?

Berman: No, I knew very little about comic books before I started this project. It has proved to be an exciting and rewarding experience. Not only have I enjoyed learning about the subject, I have appreciated all of the help from the lenders, collectors, etc. who I have met.

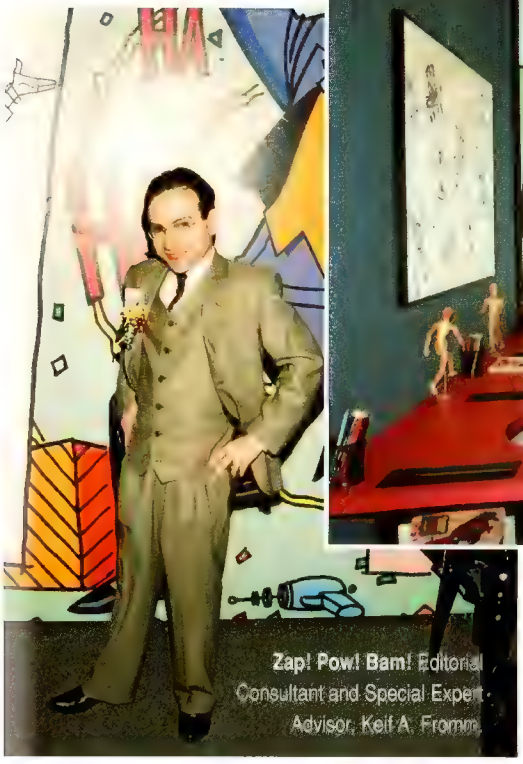
Part of the main entryway to Zap! Pow! Bam!

Fromm: I noticed that The Breman is being loaned materials from some very prominent collectors. Of all the material that The Breman has received, do you have any particular favorites?

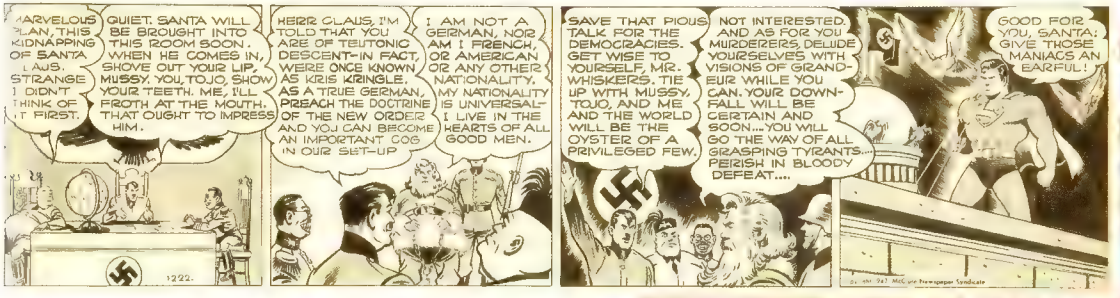
Berman: That's hard to say. I like them all for different reasons. I've grown attached to the interior pages because they tell the story. I like the splash pages because they are so "LOUD"! I like the covers because that's where so much of the great art was created. As far as specific pieces, I think the thrill for me was more or less to see some of the early Superman and Batman covers because those were two of the books that I read the most as a child, especially Superman.

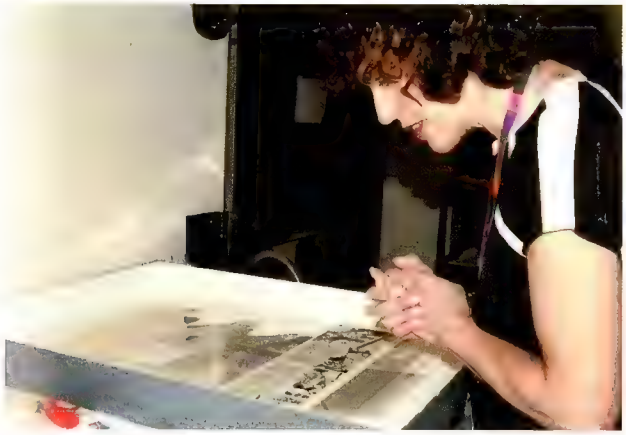
Fromm: What has it been like working with Jerry Robinson on this exhibition?

[continued on page 65]



(below)The Breman's Museum Director, Jane Leavey (left) and Archivist Sandra Berman (right). Behind the scenes at The Breman, Sandra Berman cataloging artwork, a World War II/Christmas Theme **Superman** daily strip, by Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster and Jack Burnley. This strip entitled "Santa Tells 'Em Off!" depicts Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo discussing their plans for world domination by kidnapping Santa Claus. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)

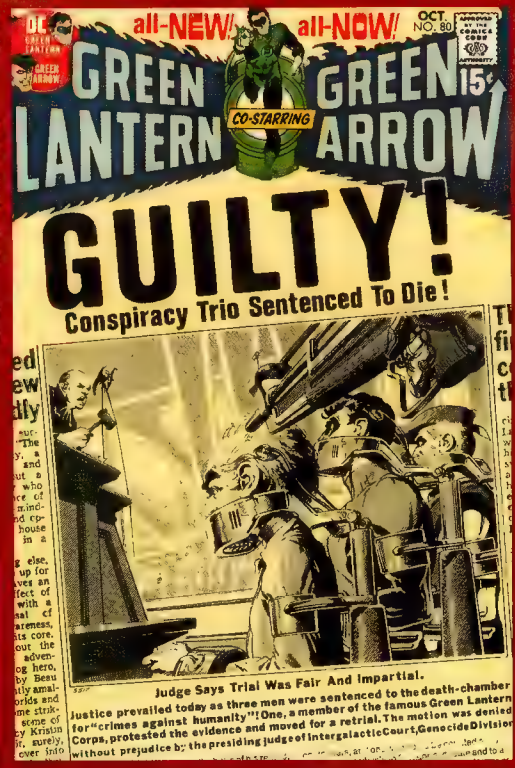

MARVELOUS PLAN, THIS KIDNAPPING OF SANTA CLAUS. STRANGE I DIDN'T THINK OF IT FIRST.
QUIET! SANTA WILL BE BROUGHT INTO THIS ROOM SOON. WHEN HE COMES IN, SHOVE OUT YOUR LIP, MUSSY. YOU, TOJO, SHOW YOUR TEETH. ME, I'LL FROTH AT THE MOUTH. THAT OUGHT TO IMPRESS HIM.
HERR CLAUS, I'M TOLD THAT YOU ARE OF TEUTONIC DESCENT—IN FACT, WERE ONCE KNOWN AS KRIS KRINGLE. AS A TRUE GERMAN, PREACH THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEW ORDER AND YOU CAN BECOME AN IMPORTANT COG IN OUR SET-UP
I AM NOT A GERMAN, NOR AM I FRENCH, OR AMERICAN OR ANY OTHER NATIONALITY. MY NATIONALITY IS UNIVERSAL—I LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF ALL GOOD MEN.
SAVE THAT PIOUS TALK FOR THE DEMOCRACIES. GET WISE TO YOURSELF, MR. WHISKERS. TIE UP WITH MUSSY, TOJO, AND ME AND THE WORLD WILL BE THE OYSTER OF A PRIVILEGED FEW.
NOT INTERESTED. AND AS FOR YOU MURDERERS, DELUDE YOURSELVES WITH VISIONS OF GRANDEUR WHILE YOU CAN. YOUR DOWNFALL WILL BE CERTAIN AND SOON....YOU WILL GO THE WAY OF ALL GRASPING TYRANTS.... PERISH IN BLOODY DEFEAT....
GOOD FOR YOU, SANTA! GIVE THOSE MANIACS AN EARFUL!



GL/GA #76.

GL/GA #77.

GL/GA #80. Many of the issues Adams and O'Neil dealt with during their tenure are—sadly—troubling the American mind, heart and soul to this very day.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HE'S TRYING TO SAVE US ALL!
STOP! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
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GREEN LANTERN OR EARTH! HEAD ME--HERE 100, ARISE! YOU HAVE BEEN INSUBORDINATE! YOU DISOBEYED OUR ORDERS!
WE COMMANDED YOU TO REMAIN ON STATION 1417! HE DISREGARD YOUR TASK COMPLETED!
I... I'M SORRY
THAT IS RIGHT LANTERN... APOLOGIZE! GROVEL IN FRONT OF THAT VILLAINOUS SLIMEBALL!
YOU CALL YOURSELF A HERO! CHUM, YOU DON'T EVEN QUALIFY AS A MAN!
YOU'RE NO MORE THAN A PUPPET... AND THE GUARDIANS PULL YOUR STRINGS!
LISTEN... FORGET ABOUT CHASING AROUND THE GALAXY... AND REMEMBER AMERICA...
IT'S A GOOD COUNTRY... BEAUTIFUL... FERTILE... AND TERRIBLY SICK!
THERE ARE CHILDREN DYING... HONEST PEOPLE COWERING IN FEAR... DISILLUSIONED KIDS RIPPING UP CAMPUSES...
ON THE STREETS OF MEMPHIS A GOOD BLACK MAN DIED... AND IN LOS ANGELES, A GOOD WHITE MAN FELL...
SOMETHING IS WRONG! SOMETHING IS KILLING US ALL...! SOME HIDEOUS MORAL CANCER IS ROTTING OUR VERY SOULS!

GL/GA #89.

Not sure if work done 30 years ago still has any relevance today? Try reading this stirring epilogue from **GL/GA** #76 without getting a little misty-eyed. Better still, read it aloud. Breath the words—

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HOLY HANNAH!... THIS IS A TEAM-UP? THOSE MAD METAL MEN HAVE FLIPPED THEIR RIVETS, AND ARE TEARING THE ELEMENT MAN TO BITS!

Denny O'Neil
Walls and Bridges

Denny O'Neil talks about social causes and entertainments, censorship and worthy compromises, the utility of walls for some and the need for stronger bridges between all—oh, and a lot about writing and editing comics, too.

conducted by Bill Baker

What else do you really *need to know about this piece besides what you've been given in the subtitle above? Hm...*

How about the fact that Denny and his lovely wife, Marifran, are enjoying his second year of "retirement" from writing immensely...despite the fact that he's working under tighter deadlines writing new things than ever before? Sound like a conundrum, a paradox, even a bit of magic?

Well, yes. It's all that and more. Which is only natural. After all, this is *Denny O'Neil we're discussing—one of the most revered and influential of modern comics writers, he's also an editor nonpareil who, with gifts subtle yet strong, has left an indelible stamp on not just the entire Batman family of books, but also—and perhaps more importantly—upon an entire generation of highly gifted pencilers, inkers, writers, colorists, painters, letterers, fellow editors and innumerable other behind-the-scenes folk who have and will surely continue to play an important role in the future of comics.*

And to think that it all really got started after this hard-news-journalist-turned-comics-scribe began to wed the prevalent commercial heroic narrative and the unexpected freedoms found in a medium then typically described as "just for kids" with his larger societal and environmental concerns to create something thoughtful yet highly entertaining all those years ago...

So, anyone want to say that one man can't change the world, even just a little bit, if he but tries when an opportunity presents itself?

Bill Baker: Denny, what brought all of the ideas and issues that were at the forefront of our societal concerns to bear upon your *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* run...and how'd you get away with it?

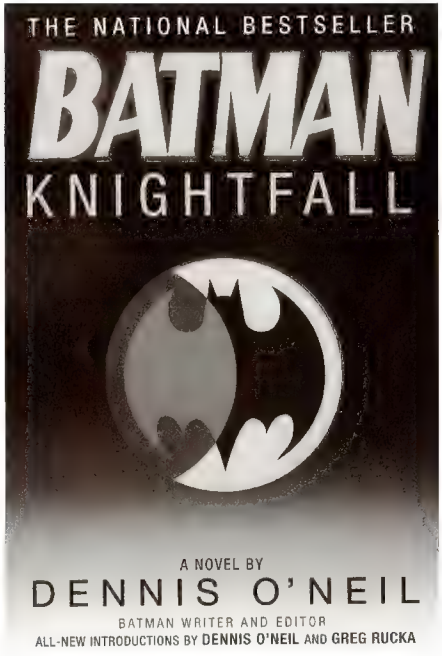
Denny O'Neil: An opportunity presented itself. I had been a journalist before becoming a comic book writer, and had spent some time floating around the Caribbean with the Navy, and married a Catholic worker-peace activist, and became kind of peripheral to the whole peace and civil rights movement, both in Saint Louis and in New York—that is, I was never an organizer or anything like that, but I did go on the marches, and I supported this stuff. It was concerning me a lot. It still does.

So first, at Charlton, when Dick Giordano needed a comic book written very quickly—virtually overnight—because something else had run into legal complications, I did something called "Children of Doom" which was a very mild anti-war message piece. And [while] doing the *Justice League [of America]* based on that incident in Ohio where a river caught fire, I did a pro-environmental piece. And [at the same time] I was still doing occasional bits of journalism, and still involved in the peace and civil rights movements.

So along came Julie Schwartz saying, "We want to continue publishing *Green Lantern*, but it's floundering. Do you have any ideas?" Neal Adams and I were the flavor of the week—I should say, we were the new kids on the block. So I just saw an opportunity to take my real life concerns and combine them with what I was doing for a living. Also, we discovered that comics are a very congenial medium to dramatize a lot of these concerns. If you were doing something about the economy, it would be very hard to do that in a melodramatic structure with pictures. But civil rights, environment, corporate malfeasance, [American] Indian problems, those were all things that did lend themselves to graphic treatment. So we did it. It was just an opportunity, and we took it.

Baker: It's really interesting how much freedom you guys were given, especially considering just how much of the media of the day was tightly monitored, or even heavily censored; it's a bit too reminiscent of the situation America finds itself in yet again, sadly.

O'Neil: As far as I could tell, again working as a journalist, there were about



The most recent edition of **Knightfall**, O'Neil's very fine novelization of Batman's long, dark night of the soul after having his body and spirit broken at the hands of a medically supercharged Bane, was published by Barnes and Nobles for under $10!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN V. LINDSAY, MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
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WINNER of ACADEMY AWARD for BEST COMIC!

GL/GA #86, the second half of the Adams-O'Neil team's ground-breaking anti-drug issues.

three publications that were telling the truth about what was happening in Vietnam, at a time when it would have been very valuable for the American people to know that fact. *The New York Times* did a fine job, at a point where I understand that *The Times* was under some pressure to pull David Halberstam off the assignment—and, in fact, he would have been pulled off of things in the natural course of things, anyway. They kept him on it. Then there was a guy named Moore, who I think worked for *Time* magazine at the time, and one or two others. But generally, as often happens, we didn't get the real story until pretty late.

So, I don't know if people had really realized what we were doing if we'd have had the free reign we did. I just have no way of knowing that. But we kind of snuck in under the radar. I don't think censorship was ever going to be much of a concern.

Baker: And I suppose that by the time it might have become one, the numbers had come in and they realized that readers really liked what they were seeing, and you'd begun to get some recognition from the mainstream press, too.

O'Neil: Yes, by the time we were mentioned in *The Times*, Neal and I were suddenly going on the radio, which was certainly *not* a usual thing for comic book people to do; comic book people had about the lowest profile of anyone in New York publishing for years.

So, yeah, we were suddenly—along with Julie and Carmine [Infantino]—we were out there. And especially when we did the drug issue, and we got the mayor of New York to approve it, which sort of put the establishment's imprimatur on it, and we were going to be OK from then on.

Baker: Did that issue have the Code's approval, or did they reject that issue?

O'Neil: Was that us, or Stan [Lee and Gil Kane's *Amazing Spider-Man* #s 98 and 99]? I think we managed to make enough compromises...

The Code was never written for, or intended to deal with, real life situations. My memory of *that* version [of the Code] back then is that it was not a very precise document. It was pretty fuzzily phrased, and it was not enforced by people who were trained to do that kind of work. So I think Neal altered about three shots within the story, and everything else went ahead as we had planned, [except for some] very minor alterations.

Baker: With your background as a journalist, did that rankle you at all? Or did you just see it as part of the job's parameters, as part of what you had to put up with while working on the creative side of the fence?

O'Neil: Poets write for maybe a few hundred people, and they generally have the satisfaction of not being edited. But comics, then more than now, were a mass medium, and you take a certain amount of collaboration of one sort or another as a given. I think the changes that we had to make were *so* minor given what we were being allowed to do that they didn't bother us.

Baker: Do you remember how the basic idea for the series, having Green Lantern come down to earth for a walkabout among the common people so he can better understand and address their troubles, got introduced and developed into the story arc we know today?

O'Neil: I don't know. I've thought about it since. I remember being knocked out by *On the Road* by [Jack] Kerouac. I read the book and then I went into New Orleans for a week, in the middle of exam week! [General laughter] Which didn't endear me to the professors at St. Louis University, and resulted in my graduating three months late. Then there was *Easy Rider*, which I remember blew the top of my head off when I saw it. So I think those things may have been an influence. I don't know, because it was *so* long ago, so much has happened since, and we would have laughed, I think, if somebody'd said, "Well, 30 years from now, somebody's going to be asking you about this!"

Neal and I were *aware* that we were

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John Stewart, then Earth's newest addition to the Corps, made quite a debut with this bold cover for **GL/GA** #87, which dealt with the issue of racial prejudice.

GL/GA #89, the final issue of the now-legendary Adams-O'Neil **GL/GA** run, fused instantly recognized religious iconography with pure pop entertainment and the creators' real and serious concerns for our environment to create one of the most recognized covers of the entire Silver Age.

pushing the envelope, certainly. But it was comic books. We were pushing the envelope, and I was getting paid the same page rate for doing *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* as for doing *Superfriends*. So it was nice, and it was flattering. [Also] Neal and I and Julie all remember some of this stuff differently. I don't know who's right. Don't know that it really makes much difference.

Baker: And it could be one of those situations, too, where you're all right in your own, individual ways.

O'Neil: Yes. It's analogous to [the question of] "Who, in fact, created The Joker?" Well, three people took credit for it. I'm inclined to believe Jerry Robinson, but I don't know.

Baker: Do you perhaps remember any moments while working on the series where you were surprised, or where serendipity worked in your favor, or did it all just seem to fall into place once you had the basic idea down?

O'Neil: Well, I think another way we were lucky is that Neal and I were both at the point in our careers…. If I can use that kind of high falutin' term for the series of jobs I've done for the past forty years. [Laughter] I've never thought of myself as having a career: that's for guys who went to Business School. I'm a hippie. But, we had our tool kits in place. We had been doing it long enough to know *how* to do it. We were past the learning process, so we knew how to write and illustrate a comic book story. We didn't have to founder. We were fairly confident in that respect, and that then got married to the social relevance concerns that you mentioned.

I don't know if there was very much serendipity. There was some *bad* serendipity in the run. We did a story about feminism and.... Listen, I'm a butcher's kid from north St. Louis who grew up in the '40s and '50s, and my wife at the time had just announced she was a feminist, and I was *not* prepared for that. [General laughter] I mean I was a liberal/radical—but wait a minute! [More laughter] I think maybe five years later, I would have been ready to write that story. But, at the time, it was something I thought that I *should* do, [although] I was not really, psychologically, prepared to do. So I blundered ahead and did it—which one critic thought was the best in the lot, so you never know.

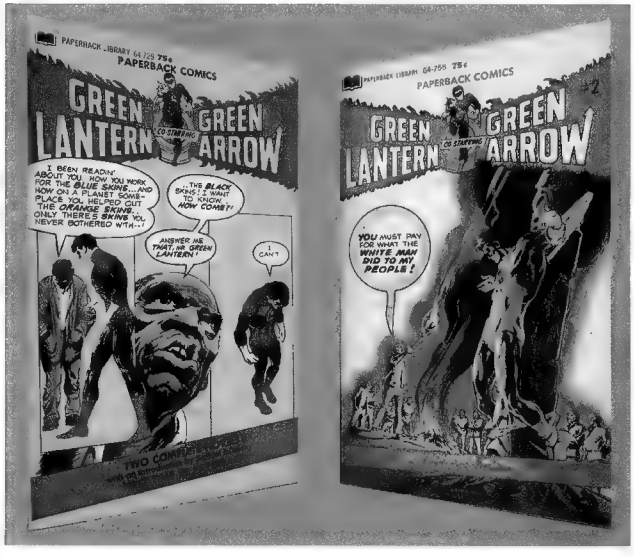
In the first trade paperback reprinting of those stories, I think for space purposes, that one was omitted and I silently rejoiced. [General laughter] In the big, fat, fancy $75 hardcover, it's there, and I think it's in the new trade paperback reprints of that hardcover. They can't all be winners, I guess. And probably, at the time, I didn't realize that was as big a loser as I now think it is.

Baker: What might be some of the aspects of that particular story which really bother you?

O'Neil: Well, for one thing, I was making the feminists harpies. I mean, what kind of message are we sending here, exactly, folks? I can't bear to reread it.

Baker: So you see it as one of those ideas that was flawed right from its inception, then?

O'Neil: Yeah. It was something I should not have touched.



(left) The cover of Paperback Library's 1972 black and white reprinting of the **GL/GA** road buddies saga captures what is perhaps the quintessential moment of the entire Adams-O'Neil run. (right) The second volume of the Paperback Library reprint series featured tales concerning the plight of Native Americans, and the danger of surrendering individual freedoms, particularly that of thought, over to the head of a cult.

The cover of **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** #76, Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams' initial run on that title laid bare the basic premise and tensions of the series while it simultaneously played upon readers' expectations by referencing the comic industry's long-running and popular penchant for teaming up super-heroes by first having them mistakenly battle each other before they combine their powers to deal with the real cause of society's current problems.

Baker: How do the rest of those tales hold up for you today? Are there any other parts of it that make you cringe, or some things you would have liked to have done differently?

O'Neil: Yeah. There's some rewriting done not by me, and in two instances I would *not* have…. The scenes were not exactly as I wrote them, and I thought that the point I was trying to make didn't get made; I really don't feel like going into that any further, but there's *two* things that, if I had had the magic power to change every copy of that stuff in existence, I would. We're talking maybe three pages over the whole run, so it's not much.

Anything else beyond that? No. I did look at those things, not for the latest [paperback] reprinting of them, but for the one before that. Marifran and I spent a weekend listening to Bob Dylan songs, and we used a Dylan line for an epigraph for each of the stories, so I did reread them then. And I was pleasantly surprised that they *do* hold up. And what we didn't forget for a second was we were telling a super-hero story. People do not pick up a magazine with a guy in a costume on the cover expecting to get the *New Republic*, or *The New York Review of Books*, and we had no right to cheat them of what they've paid their money for. So, they're all pretty good super-hero stories.

The *discouraging* part of this is that they're *still* relevant. We really haven't made any progress in 30 years. In some ways, particularly environmentally, particularly for the past four years, we've lost a lot of ground. I'm *amazed* that race is still as big a problem as it is. I thought, "Well, in the '60s that got knocked down, and at least it was no longer acceptable in polite company to be prejudiced, or bigoted, and the rest is gonna fall into place." Well, it hasn't. We have problems we couldn't have anticipated back then, but we have problems.

And, on a lighter note, I'm also *amazed* that people still wear suit neckties. I thought, "By the time I'm 65, *surely* American Manhood will have collectively come to his senses to realize that these are pieces of cloth hanging down the front of your shirt, and serve no purpose."

Baker: They should have gone the way of the fedora by now.

O'Neil: Exactly! Or the buttonhook, or spats.

Baker: [Mock horror] No! Not my spats! [General laughter] Do you think that comics can have any real, or even lasting, impact on the real world—even if it's just the opening up of a mind to another possibility, another way of seeing the world and living in it?

O'Neil: Well, I'm tempted to say no, but enough people have come to me at signings and such and said that those stories woke them up—it's the most gratifying thing a writer can hear—so, yeah, sure. And all we really wanted to do was sound a wakeup call. In *none* of those stories do we really present solutions. I mean, in the *short* term, the small problem's always solved, because it wouldn't be good drama if it wasn't. But we did not present solutions to the bigger social issues. I didn't, and don't, have solutions. But I did think, "If we can get people thinking about this stuff early enough, when they're in their preadolescence and their adolescence and their early 20s, if they grow up thinking about it, maybe *they* will come up with solutions. I thought it was probably already too late for my generation, but *maybe* we can get the kids thinking about it. And if they think about it long enough, maybe they'll have better answers than we do.

I remember listening to *Superman* on the radio when I was kid, and they did a PSA [public service announcement] in which he talked about a pigment that causes some people's skin to be darker. And I *really* think that helped me not grow up bigoted. I mean, it's only a

GL/GA #82. The one thing Denny O'Neil would change about this issue? Just about everything!

Their second cover, **GL/GA** #77, literally spelled out the high-minded central theme of Adams and O'Neil's work on the series—exploring those various issues which so violently divided America then—while it also served as a visually enticing and dynamic action shot.

matter of chemistry. Those guys are only different than me in a rather inconsequential way.

So you never know, but you can hope that something has had a beneficial effect. And, conversely, you live in dread that you have accidentally, unintentionally triggered something negative in somebody.

Baker: One of the other reasons that the series holds up so well is not just that you guys were dealing with real problems that truly matter, both then and now, but also the way you explored the character's differing personalities as well as their viewpoints. And some of your choices were really interesting. For instance, having the liberal viewpoint embodied and voiced by Green Arrow, a man who was once a millionaire, while the more conservative stance was held by someone who was, in essence, a working stiff when he wasn't saving the universe as Green Lantern. Which makes me wonder if you ever worried much about the characters being engulfed or overwhelmed by the issues and the various kinds of conflicts they were dealing with?

O'Neil: Well, we weren't worried about previous characterizations, because in a *Justice League* story I had deprived Ollie of millions. And we needed to establish dialectic, you know, two points of view, and Green Arrow had been around since I think 1940, and nothing very much had been done with him. There wasn't much of a characterization established, therefore I didn't have to accommodate anybody else's ideas or vision. He was kind of a blank slate, and since Hal was considerably less.... I considered Hal a kind of glorified cop. Maybe the best cop who ever lived, but a guy who basically took orders, and had a very conventional—though not entirely unmistaken—view of right and wrong. So Ollie's characterization initially came from that need to establish contrasting points of view. And if another character had been available, and equally suited to our purpose, we might have done the same with that character.

Something I'm going to hope to remember to teach my class when I come to characterization next week; sometimes it is dictated by the needs of the story. It doesn't mean it can't have all the depth that it would have if you *started* with the character, but sometimes that's the way it works.

Baker: And is that something that you've just learned through experience?

O'Neil: Yeah, absolutely. [Laughter] Seat of the pants.

Baker: And the added pressure of the ever-looming deadline probably also helps teach you lessons like that, I'd imagine.

O'Neil: Yeah. Well, people complain about deadlines, but right now I am working under a terrible one. I have to have 75,000 words in by December 15 [2004; this interview was conducted in early October, '04]. It's harder than I've worked in years. *But* it does tend to focus you. It really does. Like Doctor

DENNY O'NEIL ON HIS HEART ATTACK AND THE MAN WHO SAVED HIM!

Bill Baker: I imagine that your recent health scare had some impact on your work schedule?

Denny O'Neil: I was just about finished with [the Charlie Kochman edited novel,] Green Lantern: Hero's Quest when I had the cardiac arrest. It will be dedicated to the guy who saved my life, whom I finally met about six months ago.

Baker: That must have been some reunion.

O'Neil: Yeah. What do you say to a guy [like that, other than,] "If you had not had the training you had, and been quick witted enough to realize what was going on and what had to be done right then and there, I would not be here." It's impossible to express. How do you do it?

Baker: Yeah. A simple, "Thanks a lot!" just doesn't seem to cover it all. [general laughter] How'd that meeting come about, anyway?

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Johnson said about someone about to be hung: "It tends to focus the mind wonderfully." I have been working under deadlines for so long...

Again, if you can not accept that, then you've got to find another way to use your talent. If you're working in TV or movies, journalism, comics, it comes with the territory. And, yeah, you can fudge it, and there are people who have made a virtual art form of fudging it, and I don't envy them, because they must live with this thing hanging over them. So it doesn't bother me very much to have deadlines—other than the current one, which is a little steep. [Laughter] And I think it can actually be beneficial; it keeps your mind from wandering all over the lot, and sort of aimed at your goal. And I have ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] so, very belatedly, after 55 years of life or so I realized that I *need* boundaries, and sometimes I have to set them for myself. Usually, the universe sets them for me.

Baker: How would you set some of those boundaries?

O'Neil: Well, currently I'm demanding 1000 words a day of myself, and the computer I'm using has a word counter at the bottom of the page. I get very tough with myself—"If you have 950 words, and your brain is fried, well, congeal it enough to get 50 more words out of yourself!" I pay a lot of attention when I do comics to the number of words per panel, and the number of panels per page. Some of that has genuine craft use, and I encourage beginners to pay a lot of attention to that. Some of it, though, I think is just a way to focus myself. I forget the composer—it was somebody doing both movie music and symphonic music—when asked if he was bothered by the fact that in a movie you'll be asked for exactly 33 seconds of something. He said, "No. Artists need walls to push against." And I *really* believe that. Without the walls.... Sometimes the wall is just the form: "OK, this is a novel," "This is a sonnet," "This is a haiku." Whatever. There are certain formal considerations involved in creating it. But it's useful for a lot of us for the wall to be there, somewhere.

Baker: Is it something where you have to change those walls, so to speak, after a certain point of working like that because, much like your body can acclimate itself to taking the same antihistamines regularly, you almost become immune to them?

O'Neil: Well, you keep flexible and let things evolve. Yeah, I think maybe there is some use to that. [John] Cheever wrote all of his novels in a different room of his house. Alexander McCall Smith recently undertook to write a novel against newspaper deadline, just like [Charles] Dickens. [Norman] Mailer did that about 30 years ago. He undertook to write a novel against monthly magazine deadlines for *Esquire*. These guys did it to challenge themselves. Even Steven King did that whole *Green Mile* series. I don't know how much pre-preparation anybody I've mentioned does, but the fact is they probably *did* write the way Dickens and [Fyodor] Dostoyevsky did, against deadline. And once, as a challenge, I wrote a *Question* story with Vic [Sage] buried up to his neck on all but the last page, and that was partially [as a result of] wondering if I could do it.

Baker: What's your writing routine like these days?

O'Neil: Well, when I retired I floundered for about a year, and then I very cleverly dropped dead. [Laughter] Then for several months my job was lying on the couch and staring. And I now find that if I do the chores in the morning, and go to work sometime between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m., that works pretty well. It does give me the evening if something else pops up, if my plans get fouled somehow. But, knock wood, so far that seems to be working pretty well. And I'm generally done when Mari gets back from work, and we can do whatever stuff needs to be done together, or go to a movie, or play backgammon, or whatever we want to do.

The novel *Knightfall*, which was also

ATTACK!, CONTINUED

O'Neil: Our local paper decided to do a feature story on the defibrillator units that you can buy for your car or home. They want to put them in every public building, and in every public vehicle, so I was the human interest lead for that story, And they asked me if I would go and have my picture taken with the guy who had actually saved my life. Well, it would have been very ungracious for me to refuse. So I went back to that restaurant for the very first time [since that incident]. A very nice guy, a fireman. And we chatted for half an hour and I promised that he would get the very first copy of the book.

Baker: What's that worthy's name, and what do you know about him?

O'Neil: John Ingallinera, I think. Very Italian. He is a fireman in New Jersey, and he is the owner of this restaurant, the Sidewalk Cafe in Piermont, New York. So he happened to be there. His restaurant is next to the town hall, and he knew there were defibrillators in the town hall. So he ran next door, and got them and brought them back, and on the third try got me breathing again.

And from there on, something Western medicine is great at is stuff like heart surgery. They know exactly what to do. I asked the guy who was going to do my operation how many of these he'd done, and he said, "I've lost

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done against a brutal and unforgiving deadline ten years ago when I had a day job, that's where I got on to this word count thing of doing the arithmetic: "This is the number of weeks I have to get the job done. This is the number of words that they are demanding." Do some division, and [that's what you write every day.] So, in that case, every night after dinner I would simply go into our bedroom, and close the door behind me, and emerge when the thousand words were done. [Laughter] And then, generally, I'd go to bed almost immediately because by then I was pretty deep into the night, and I had to get up back then and so did Mary.

Now, things are a lot more relaxed. Thank heaven.

Baker: Now when you say you do 1000 words a day, does that also include any rewrites as well? And what do you do when you come back to it? Do you just start cold, or perhaps look back and rework a bit of the previous line or two?

O'Neil: Sometimes, like last night, I had a few additional ideas about some of the scenes that I wrote yesterday. So I went back and inserted a little bit today, as today's initial work. There is not going to be much time for rewrites. There's not even going to be much time for editing! With *Knightfall*, in the middle of the process—I had about 35 or 38,000 words done—and I cleverly ran an automobile into a lane divider on Christmas Eve, and it flipped over three times. We spent five days in intensive care, and I lost about two weeks' work, so we were right down to it. And for a weekend, Charlie Kochman, the editor, came over, and we locked ourselves or closeted ourselves in the back room. About every five hours Marifran would appear with lemonade and cookies and encouraging words, and we just put in something like three 15 hour days.

But Charlie is probably the best editor I've worked with in a decade or more. I just finished doing a book with him. He's an old fashioned editor: "Are you *sure* this is what you mean?" "Are you *sure* this is as clear as you can make it?" And if the answer's, "Yes," well, that generally ends the conversation. The book I just finished with him, I would have made about 150 grammatical errors [but for him]. I don't know why I forgot that "which" and "that" are *not* interchangeable, but they're not. And comma usage changed since I was kid. I told Charlie, "Well, you're wrong about that, and I can prove it! Look...oh my god, you're right according to the reference book." [General laughter] "I *do* need a comma before the 'and'."

So it's things like that that a good editor will question. *Not* demand, and certainly *not* intrude his own ego. That was something that, really, *every* good editor in any medium I've ever worked for had in common. It means that they were without egos. It meant that, during business hours, the ego was put in the drawer. And what you're striving for is, "How good can we make this, given whatever limitations we're laboring under?"

Baker: All this gets to the heart of a subject I really did want to explore with you, and I think is of vital importance yet rarely gets addressed—the qualities of a good editor and, perhaps even more important these days, what qualities should they *not* possess? There are all kinds of information and even books out there on how to become a writer or an artist, and how to create comics, but precious little on editing them.

O'Neil: Yeah, I've only found one or two books in all my life on editing. Yeah, it's a *real* problem, and it's getting worse. But I also don't think it's possible to write the definitive manual on how to be an editor, because no two good editors do it the same way. I've worked with people who were instructional, and others who *seemed* to let me completely alone, and yet, somehow, managed to get good work. I'm thinking of Dick Giordano and Louis Simonson. In some mysterious, alchemic way, they got good work out of me by their personalities, rather than by anything they directly said or did.

One of my two or three most favorite quotes in the world is from Alfred Bester: "Among professionals, the job is boss." While you're doing it, the only goal should be, "How good can I make this?" So I came to look upon editing as a helping profession. My job is to make the creative people look good, and for a time when I went to work for the second time as an editor at DC, I didn't want my name on the stuff because I should be the invisible part of this process. I should be the guy behind the scenes. They should be looking at the magician, not the guy who is pulling on the string and making the nice lady fly around the stage. I got overruled on that, and some people have said that, "There is a real difference between a *Batman* you edited and a *Batman* that somebody else edited." I don't know. That may or may not be true.

But our job is to make the creative people look good, to backstop them. Sometimes that means angering them, say, "Well, I'm sorry, but this *has* to be redone." So what evolved was I would be very precise. I would tell them, "This is

ATTACK!, CONTINUED

track after 3000."

"OK, you'll do."

Baker: Yeah, that's typically a good sign. Especially if they're still letting him do them. [General laughter]

O'Neil: Yeah, right!

We here at CBM Central would like to thank Mr. Ingallinera, the fast thinking owner of that great eatery The Sidewalk Cafe of Piermont, NY; all the forward-thinking folks of that same burg, as well as all of the fine doctors, nurses and other medical personnel who all played a part in ensuring that Mr. O 'Neil would be staying here to keep us all entertained for a long time to come.

what I think is wrong, and this is my solution. If you have a better solution, *please*, let's do it your way. If you think I'm wrong about it being wrong, then let's discuss that. Maybe you can talk me out of it." So in one instance, *very* late in "No Man's Land"—which was this monster, one year long, 2000 page mega-series that we did [within the Batman family of titles]—I realized, belatedly, that by month 11 of the 12 *all* of the significant questions would be answered. There would be no more dramatic momentum left. So: "Do we want to do a month of just tying up loose ends, a month of dénouement?" I presented that to my writers with my solution. Greg Rucka and Devin Grayson came up with a much better answer than mine, and I think that the last month was the strongest of the twelve thanks to them. They worked their brains out, and really did *incredible* scrambling for a month. And, you know, if we'd done a month of dénouement, people wouldn't have stoned us. But, again, it would not have been as good as it could be.

So that became my way of working with writers, and it's the way I want to be worked with. [Laughter] I am *intensely* aware that I can make mistakes, and I want somebody to backstop me. On the other hand, the mistake I made when I was an editor first at DC—I was on staff about a year—was I thought, "Well, they hired me because they like the way I write, so maybe I should make everything read like I had written it!" Which was the most god-awful error. That way, the best you could hope for is third-rate O'Neil. What you want is first rate Grayson, or Rucka, or [Doug] Moench, or whoever you're working with. So you *help* them solve their problems, make them aware of what problems exist.

And the ultimate editorial tool I had was to hire good people. It's like casting a movie. If you do that, then 70% of the work is done.

Baker: Is teaching providing you something similar to what editing did?

O'Neil: Yeah. Right now I think I get more satisfaction out of teaching than writing. Marifran had an idea early on.... This is my second marriage. Our story is one of the great corny love stories of all time. We were high school/college sweethearts. Abrupt and bloody ending to the relationship. Didn't see each other for 30 years until we re-met through a series of accidents, and now have been married 16 years.... And she had an idea that I would like teaching. She has known since fifth grade that that's what she wanted to do; she's 42 years a teacher this year. And then, shortly thereafter, Howard Cruise was teaching a course on writing comics at SVA [New York School of the Visual Arts], and he had to quit, and he called me and asked if I would be interested in taking it over. So I did, and I liked it a lot, and did it until we thought we were going to move out of the area. We ended up not moving too far out of the area, but I bequeathed my classes to Jack Harris.

And then, after I did my big, spectacular, melodramatic drop dead routine, when I was up and around again, I realized I wanted to do that again. So I sent a resume to a couple of places, and one of them, Rockland Community College, was interested. So I'm teaching this semester and the next semester a Continuing Ed course in comics writing. As a kid I wanted to be an actor, and I used to do magic, and stuff like that. There is a histrionic element to teaching, so it kind of satisfies the ham in me, and it can be very satisfying. And if the class is good, it is *always* a learning experience. Because they will challenge you enough so that you have to maybe reconfirm your ideas, and the older you get, I think the more valuable that is.

Baker: Did writing also satisfy that "performance need," in a sense?

O'Neil: Yeah, I guess they're connected, since an awful lot of writers have acting in their resume. The man who's arguably the greatest American writer, Mark Twain, was possibly the world's first stand up comedian, and he did as much lecturing as writing.

They're very, very different. And I think there is a danger for writers. With writing gratification, it's delayed—or sometimes nonexistent. [Laughter] Anytime you stand in front of a group, [your audience is live] people. Writing is a very lonely life. Larry Block, the mystery novelist, said, "People talk about the glamorous profession of writing. It's no more glamorous than stenography, except at least the stenographer has another person in the room." So I have to keep telling fledgling writers that, "If you get serious about this, you're going to be from 20 to 40 hours a week alone in a room. You can get help before, you can get help after. During? No. And if you don't get satisfaction from the manipulation of language and image alone, if that doesn't really speak to some need in you, then really you should do this on weekends, or find another venue for your talent. And I think the worst thing that can happen is that some talented fan will start getting professional work, and get some attention paid, and find that he is married with a child and this is what he's doing for a living, and then that the momentum has gone out of it. And that the satisfactions of seeing your name in print, getting invited to conventions, getting interviewed, things like that, they're *nice*. It's all sort of fun. But it's *really* about 20 to 40 hours a week, alone in a room, and a lot of people seem to hit a wall in their mid-thirties.

The guys who have been doing it for a long time, and have been doing it *well* for a long time, *want* to be storytellers, and they find that comics is a congenial medium. It's a medium they understand. It's a medium they like. But, *first* comes the storytelling—*then* you find a way to do it. Or a way you like to do it, or a way that's suited to do it. I think if it goes the other way around, you're going to be in trouble, probably.

Baker: Do you have any other suggestions for those who want to make their living as writers?

O'Neil: Try cyanide first. It's faster, cheaper! [General laughter]

Zap! Pow! Bam! at the Bremen

[continued from page 52]

Berman: Absolutely pleasurable. He is just such a remarkable person. I've enjoyed meeting him. I've enjoyed spending time with him. And he's just such a legend. I think he's loved by almost everybody in the field. There's a kind of reverence when you mention his name and it certainly opened a lot of doors for us with both lenders and the families of some of the artists who are no longer living.

Fromm: What are some of the pieces that Jerry Robinson loaned to this exhibition?

Berman: He's loaning some Superman covers, some Batman covers; the original art and a wonderful script. This is the only one still in existence scripted by Bill Finger for a Batman comic book.

Fromm: That's the Punch & Judy story from *Batman* #31, right?

Berman: Right, *Batman* #31.

Fromm: It is my understanding that you have also been in contact with other Golden Age industry professionals and their relatives. Can you tell me how it was working with them and what they placed on loan?

Berman: Joe Simon—Joe's great. He placed on loan one of his re-creations of the very famous *Captain America* #1 cover. We're real excited to have it in the show. It's actually our only re-creation, but we felt it was such an important piece. We really were thankful that Joe decided to loan it to us.

Peter Meskin (son of Mort Meskin)—when his father finished or wasn't doing comic book art as much anymore, he did a series of Jewish New Year's cards. Since it's going to be the holiday season (the Jewish New Year's season) when we open the exhibition we're going to have those holiday cards in our front lobby.

Joanne Siegel (wife of Jerry Siegel) and Laura Siegel (daughter of Jerry Siegel)—we're thrilled that they're actually coming to the opening! We're very, very excited about it! They loaned some personal items from both Joe (Shuster) and Jerry Siegel. I prefer a little vagueness to the exact details to entice everybody to come to the show, and hopefully see some of those personal mementoes that were from both of the creators of Superman.

Lisa Kirby (daughter of Jack Kirby)—Lisa loaned us mainly some photographs. The photos were of her dad in uniform during World War II as well as a couple of letters which he wrote to his wife, Roz, while in the service. Jack actually drew some cartoons on the letters too. They're pretty nice.

Paul Greene (son of writer, Joseph L. Greene)—besides being a writer at DC, I also believe that Joseph L. Greene worked at some other companies. He

[continued on page 70]

ALL CONCENTRATION CAMPS BUSTLE WITH E. PET RUMOUR THE JUSTICE SOCIETY FREEDOMS EVERBOY
YOU SAY YOU SEE IN MY FATE IS THERE WHAT I'M NOT ONLY THE LAST OF ALL THE ONES

Dr. Fate splash, **All Star** #14 (Dec 1942-Jan 1943), Howard Sherman. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)

Adventure Comics #78 (Sep 1942) cover art, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. (Collection of Jerry Robinson)

NO.49
OCT. NOV.
52 PAGES
ALL STAR COMICS
THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA FIGHTS AN ATTACK FROM THE SKIES! THE INVASION OF THE FIRE PEOPLE!
10¢
PEOPLE OF THE FUTURE TAKE WARNING BEWARE THE YELLOW COMET

All Star Comics #49 (Oct-Nov 1949) cover, Arthur Peddy and Bernard Sachs. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm).

Ghost Rider #2 (1950) cover art, Frank Frazetta. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)

ABOVE: Another example of Steranko's art from the upcoming Domino Lady book. LEFT: Pencil rough for The Shadow.

Continued from page 49

Baker: What can the pulps provide the world today?

Steranko: Any literary medium would be good for today's youth, whose comprehension and communication skills have been corrupted by more visual entertainments with less demanding disciplines. Like early comics, the pulps embraced moral and ethical values, largely missing from today's product.

Baker: How about violence?

Steranko: No problem. I like to fight!

Baker: I mean violence in the pulps? Weren't they more violent than other popular entertainments in their era? How can you reconcile the violence seemingly inherent to the pulp form, while publicly rejecting at least some of the new comics that deliberately employ violence as a storytelling device?

Steranko: Your generalization is somewhat skewed. The backbone of pulps was action, but with strong moral overtones. Many pulp characters, such as The Shadow and Doc Savage, spurned killing their adversaries. The Spider was an exception. Even then, it was often a matter of bloodless slaughter, not the lingering, visceral experience aimed at contemporary audiences by today's popular media.

Baker: Well, is there any real justification for the portrayal of violence in popular entertainment? Shouldn't we just stop producing violent stuff, and find new ways of presenting conflict that's effective, entertaining, and exciting? Or is there a real place, perhaps even a need for violence in our art?

Steranko: Physical violence is a shortcut to dramatic conflict, the easy way out for writers who may not have the kind of chops that Fitzgerald and Faulkner exhibited. Nonetheless, for every Updike and Oates, there are hosts of Hemingways and Hammetts. Check out the classics, from Moby Dick to McTeague, greed, hatred, fear, alienation all lead to violence. It's a very real aspect of human nature and to deny it would be unnatural. Sure, violence can be therapeutic, but the pervasive violence that bombards us from every medium may be damaging to undeveloped minds. Film at eleven!

Baker: Well, all this talk about pulps leads to your involvement with *Domino Lady*, which Vanguard Productions is releasing in November. Who is she?

Steranko: One of the few cover-featured femme fatales in the pulps, a playgirl avenger with a mask, an hourglass figure, a loaded pistol, and a black-widow attitude. How many comics manhunters did she spawn? How high can you count?

Last year, Rich Harvey of BoldVenture Press asked me to package a collection of the six *Domino Lady* thrillers that were published in the '30s for a paperback. Those pulps—especially the issues that visualized her on their covers—are extremely collectible; fine copies can sell for $1000.

Steranko's beautifully rendered drawing of The Shadow rescuing The Batman.

Baker: You've painted more major characters than any other artist and you wanted to add her name to your list.

Steranko: Right! I agreed to generate double title-page illustrations for each story, in addition to designing the book, and painting a cover for it. Vanguard made a deal with BoldVenture to release a hardbound edition, and limited, deluxe slipcased edition. Vanguard publisher J. David Spurlock wanted to make it a major "Steranko package." The question then became what content could be added to enhance the Vanguard volumes. What else? More art and more words!

Few readers, even pulp experts, realize that almost no pulp characters had origin stories, other than a throwaway paragraph or two imbedded somewhere in their tales. Obviously, pulp editors felt it was more important to make

readers believe their heroes were ongoing, rather than having a definite starting point—unlike their comics counterparts.

So, the opportunity to redress the situation—at least for the Domino Lady—dropped in my lap: I would create the character's *origin story*—65 years *after* her initial appearance.

Baker: Many of your fans only think of you as an artist, even though you scripted most of your comics stories and your hardboiled graphic novel *Red Tide*, among other things, not to mention both best-selling volumes of your comic histories.

Steranko: In my mind, I'm a writer first and foremost. I've spent more of my creative life writing than anything else. I wrote ad copy and presentations when I worked in an advertising agency, penned several magic books and numerous magazine features, and, for a quarter century, edited and published *Prevue*, during which I wrote millions of words, yet I'm perceived as an artist.

Baker: Maybe your Domino Lady origin will change that perception. How'd you approach creating the backstory for the character?

Steranko: I began by rereading the original pulp tales to amass background data and keep from violating what came before: she graduated from Berkeley; lives in LA, near Hollywood; and her district attorney father was assassinated by gangsters. To avenge him, she puts on a black mask and a white dress—and becomes a Zorro-like figure. That's the framework, basically very little, which gave me real latitude to stretch my imagination.

Can I be candid? The Domino Lady pulp yarns were fun, but hardly credible. How the hell does a college deb face down hardened criminals or even go unrecognized—platinum hair and sexy figure—by donning a domino mask? I don't think so! That was my starting point.

Unlike pulp cover artist Norm Saunders, who showed her in full light, I made her a creature of darkness and disguise. I allied her with someone who knows the landscape of crime intimately and, more importantly, fleshed out her motivation and developed her character. I explain why she's capable of doing what most others can't or won't do—all of which was missing from the original stories. Then, I layered on the deco quality, added an exotic background, opened up the story for international scope, and salted the origin with vintage cultural references that I felt would make the story more logical and intriguing—plus be more fun for readers. The result was about 35,000 words.

Baker: What's your actual writing process for a prose story, and how does it compare with the other forms you've worked in? Is it all just writing or starting out with an outline or does each format require a different approach?

Steranko: As a kid, I loved puzzles and I approach every assignment—art, writing, or otherwise—like a puzzle. It's always a solution-driven process and often one with many possible answers. I test them all to discover which works best and proceed accordingly. I have no interest in Xerox-copy solutions, which is one of the reasons I found it difficult to work in assembly-line, mainstream comics, where the innovative is shunned.

With the Domino Lady, the first stage was to develop an appropriate *voice*, which was neither hardboiled nor similar to that of the original stories. Readers of the new edition can compare the style I developed with that of the pulp author's and decide which they prefer. It should come as no secret that I write visually and that the action plays out like a movie. I integrated the character's sexuality into the plot—rather than just have her hopping in and out of bathtubs just to describe her nudity—and added an ample helping of humor to make it palatable. It's evident in the story's title: *Aroused, the Domino Lady*.

In my view, the Domino Lady is not a heroine of two-fisted, shoot-'em-up action, but of artifice and duplicity, two very feminine traits. Her weapons are wit, guile and sexuality. She's a masked Machiavelli, an illusionist on a stage set with murder and mayhem. I relied heavily on my personal experience in the magic field to cast the Domino Lady's origin, where nothing's ever what it seems to be and where killer surprises materialize as fast as falling dominos.

Baker: How about the art? Does creating illustrations, covers, and sequential pages require different processes or is it all just makin' it happen?

Steranko: Nothing *just* happens on my drawing board. Right or wrong, I have a reason for every line I make on a work of art and, although it may sound like unabashed hype, I had a great time with the Domino Lady illustrations. The publishers gave me *carte blanche* to explore my own vision without editorial manipulation and the result is an amalgam of surrealism, symbolism and movie-poster design—the elements that set me apart from my comics contemporaries—with a character who is sexy, smart, sophisticated and dangerous—the ultimate femme fatale. I'm especially happy with the results of the 16-page color folio in Vanguard's signed, deluxe hardcover!

Baker: What keeps you doing this work, be it writing or drawing or painting or performing, today? Why do you keep doing it? I ask because it seems, at least on the surface, like you've accomplished just about everything there is that you might ever conceivably want to do. Is there something that you've never done, some project that you never got funded or green lit, that remains unfinished?

Steranko: I've always been driven by the tyranny of my visions and never being satisfied with anything. I'm like a shark which must swim or die; I have no choice in the matter, but to keep creating compulsively almost every waking minute. It's a curse and a gift, at the same time. And what's still left to do? Hell, I've only just scratched the surface.

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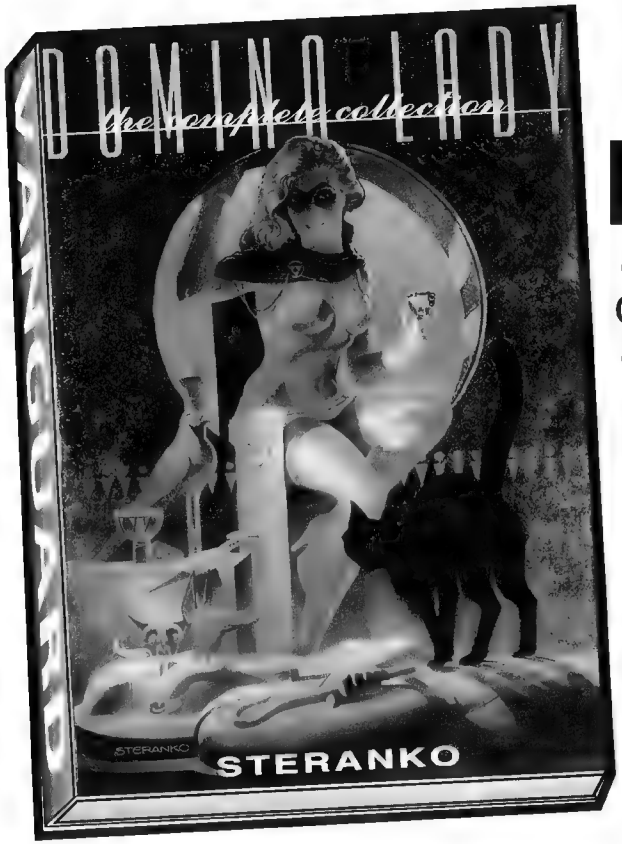

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Zap! Pow! Bam! at the Bremen

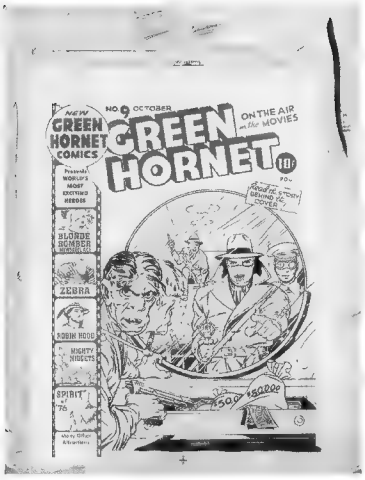
[continued from page 65]

wrote a lot of Johnny Quick stories for DC, *Green Lama* and *Golden Lad* for Spark, and so he happened to save a lot of stats and books from those he worked on. Since these stats and books are mainly from the career of his father, Paul Greene is loaning those to us as well.

Fromm: What does The Breman hope will come out of this exhibition and do you believe it will leave a lasting impression on people?

Berman: Absolutely! I think that whenever I say that the creators of Superman were Jewish, no one can believe it or at least very few people know that. So I think the one thing is just an educational aspect to mention the involvement of so many young Jewish men in this field early on. I think that's just an interesting part of the whole exhibition. "Zap! Pow! Bam!" also emphasizes the whole impact of comic books on our times and how comic books mirrored our society throughout their Golden Age. So in the early years before World War II, the comic books mirrored frustrations, fears and problems that were endemic to the society the

Master Comics #27 (Jun 1942) cover art, Emanuel (Mac) Raboy. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)



Green Hornet #9 (Oct 1942) cover art, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. (Collection of Heritage Galleries & Auctioneers)

people were living in during those pre-War and Depression years. Once the war hit, comic books mirrored those fears, those anxieties as well as the patriotism that was developing because we were involved in World War II. Then of course right after the war, comic books once again mirrored what was going on in society during the so-called Atomic Age. With the Cold War brewing and a change in attitudes occurring, comic books came right along with that and evolved with the times. This showed a progression between comic books and society and what was happening in society that ultimately went hand-in-hand.

Mary Marvel prototype drawing (1942), Marc Swayze. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)

Fromm: Great, Sandy! I truly appreciate the time you've taken to speak with me. Congratulations and good luck with the exhibition.

Berman: Thank you for the interview and for all of the invaluable assistance you've given The Breman with the exhibition, Keif.

World's Finest Comics #19 (Fall 1945) cover art, Dick Sprang and Jack Burnley. (Collection of Keif A. Fromm)

"Zap! Pow! Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comics, 1938-1950" runs through August 28, 2005. The Breman is open Monday through Thursday 10 AM to 5 PM, Friday 10 AM to 3 PM, and Sunday 1 PM to 5 PM. For further information on "Zap! Pow! Bam!" and future exhibitions at The Breman please contact:

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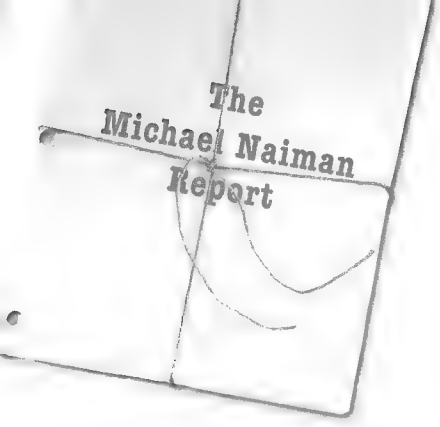


by Michael Naiman

A Pressing Issue

October Halloween madness has come and gone and everyone is getting ready for Turkey-Fest 2004. However, there were some very hair-raising sales of Harvey slabbed items last month.

Richie Rich Money World #1 9.4 $786 (**10.48X Guide**); *Richie Rich Bank Books* #1 9.4 $547 (**9.1X Guide**); *Richie Rich and Dot* #1 9.4 $175 (**6.25X Guide**); *Hot Stuff the Little Devil* #1 6.0 $450 (**3.75X Guide**). And if that doesn't scare the pants off of you what about these prices for Casper toys and artifacts?

Casper the Ghost American Bisque Cookie Jar 12 inches tall with Harvey Publications license stamp $306; Casper Fleer 1960 card set complete $282; Casper Pez no feet with image cutouts $257; 1961 Casper Talking Doll by Mattel in the box $108; 1960 Fleer gum wrapper (only) VG with pin holes in the corners $50; Casper Halloween Costume (no box) $40; Casper Musical crank guitar 1959 by Mattel $40; 1974 Schaper (the people who bring you Cootie!) box and game $32; Casper Ghost Costume by Collegeville costume IB from the '50s $29; Casper Trick or Treat Pail with original tag 10 inches tall with embossed Harvey characters that include Wendy, Richie Rich and Nightmare with Casper riding on his back $25.

Not to be outdone by Harvey's Little Wuss-Boy Ghost, Marvel's Green Goblin has also made an appearance on the sales charts in October: *Amazing Spider-Man* #14 VF+ $840, CGC 8.0 VF $1216, CGC 6.0 FN $531 and CGC 4.5 VG+ $350; *ASM* #17 CGC 8.0 VF $400, CGC 6.0 FN $133 , unslabbed FN $98; *ASM* #23 CGC 8.0 VF $228, CGC 4.5 VG+ $95, raw copy VG $57; *ASM* #26 CGC 7.5 $190, raw VF $103, CGC 6.5 FN+ $93.

Let's not be a pumpkin-head and forget about the GG toys that are available. Recent sales include: Mego Green Goblin doll Mint In Box $220, and another without the box for $85; and there's the Battle Ravaged Green Goblin Mint On Card for $56.

One last spine-tingling item for October: Barry Bonds 700th home run ball brought a top bid of $804,129 a week before Halloween after a 10-day online auction. The ball had received 240 offers by the time **Overstock.com** closed the bidding. The identity of the top bidder, nicknamed "bomasterj," was not immediately made public. In October 2001, Bonds' record-setting 73rd homer of the season sparked litigation that ended when a judge ordered two men who claimed ownership to split the $450,000 the ball fetched. Todd McFarlane paid $3.2 million for Mark McGwire's 70th home run ball in 1999.

Now, on to more pressing items—

There's nothing like a good ole controversy in the hobby. The exchange of ideas and opinions is always invigorating. And, in this hobby *everyone* has an opinion!

Under the banner of "Everybody is doing it" there is word on the street that a grading company (and yes, there is more than one!) has plans to launch a new pressing service for the collecting community. This separate company will be run by their current in-house restoration "expert" and will perform pressing for clients who choose to have this service done. Will this mark the Official Blessing that "… pressing is not restoration?" Why, you ask? Because it will not be disclosed on the universal label! And since it's not restoration and "everybody is doing it" the grading service would now like to do this service for you, the collecting community.

Since the grading service is stating that "pressing is not restoration" it follows that they were also aware that pressed books were/are being submitted. This may answer some of your questions on how certain books sold in an auction had one grade and "magically" reappeared in a later auction as a higher grade (due to undisclosed restoration).

Some collectors and dealers have been taking the same line that coin grading services also perform cleaning of coins—as a "service." And if the coin collecting universe has no problem with it, why should comic collectors? The same goes for sports cards. How comforting that statement must make baseball card collectors feel to know that their Mickey Mantle rookie cards might be squeezed and pressed.

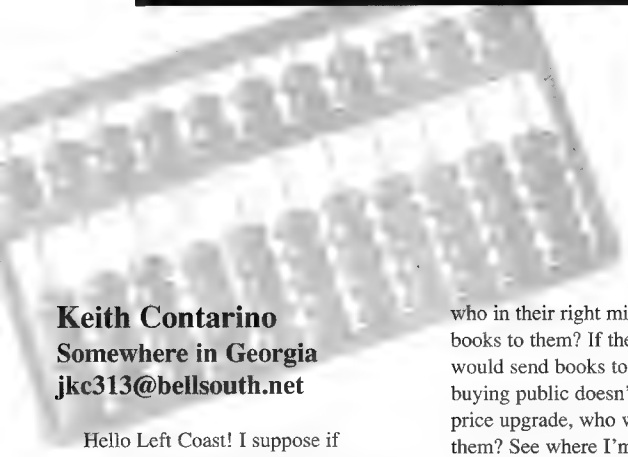
Let's explore how a grading service could make this work, and the spin they might use to promote it.

The new company could be named Comic Conservation Services (CCS) "not owned" by any grading service. Much like Numismatic Conservation Services NCS is "not owned" by NGC yet is neatly tucked on the Numismatic Grading Corporation home page.

The restoration expert will evaluate the book and quote you the price for pressing. In addition you might/could also inquire to have restoration removal and other "stuff" done for additional charges.

Translation: The same "conservation" service provided by other restorers will probably be the same service provided by this new company. Hopefully this work will net the person paying to have this done with the Universal label. Since the former employee/restorer for the grading service would/should know what can and cannot be done to a book without triggering the dreaded (pick your

[continued on page 76]



Keith Contarino
Somewhere in Georgia
jkc313@bellsouth.net

Hello Left Coast! I suppose if anyone's sales are sluggish, it must be Bush's fault (submitted pre-election results-MN) Sorry, couldn't resist. My sales have been fine both on eBay and some private sales offline. Just keeps getting crazier and crazier.

Had a very, very nice *Avengers* #12 CGC 9.2 with Off White pages—sold in the $300 range. Two weeks later I sold a 9.4 *Batman* #237 for $518! Now, I like Adams *Batman* books as much as anyone and if this were a 9.6 I can understand, but at 9.4 selling for almost as much as a NM- *Avengers* #12? I don't pretend to understand but continue to buy Adams books that are nice, get them graded, cross my fingers, and wait a year or so and put them on eBay. It's disappointing that 9.2 is becoming a mid-grade on comics from the '60s.

Was happy to see there are still high grade Fiction House buyers out there. Sold a beautiful *Jumbo* #111 CCG 9.4 for $315 and an 8.5 #85 for $150. The two *Jumbo*s were from a one-owner collection I bought in New York in 1991 or 1992. The only difference in the two was a tiny ding upper right corner yet it graded a full three grades lower. I can unequivocally state, I rarely have any idea what a book is going to come back graded. It's always a roll of the dice.

I see CGG has changed their name. Good! Way too confusing. I can also say, without hesitation, they are stricter on books Silver Age up. I've sent the same book to both services and routinely get a half grade lower from CGG. A conundrum. Knowing they are stricter, who in their right mind would send books to them? If they get lax, who would send books to them? Since the buying public doesn't give CGG books a price upgrade, who would send books to them? See where I'm going with this? I appreciate their willingness to discuss faults and like the way they list defects. I think they are consistent and fair. But why would I send 10 *She-Hulk* #1s to them knowing they'll come back 9.4 and from CGC 9.6? I wish them well but it's a dilemma.

Other sales of note: *FF* #5 CGC 9.0 $8000. Early *FF*s 9.0 and higher are *very* scarce! I wish I had more! I think *Journey* #83-100 are also very tough even in 9.0—especially under #100. Still selling *Strange Tales* in 9.2 but can't give away 9.0s. Guess VF/NM is no longer a high grade. Another Adams book, *GL* #76 is a great buy—sold a CGC 8.0 for $260.

Final thoughts: Gee, this sure seems familiar. I looked at an *old* update from around 1990 and I was saying collectors/investors were getting ridiculously picky then, and to continue buying high-grade Silver. Guess I'll say the same thing now. There's no end in sight. I would, however, caution people to actually look at the books not just the grade. Page quality and centering are becoming more and more important. That 9.6 off center, cream pages *FF* #67 may be worth less down the road as buyers find even more creative ways to be anal about their purchases. I mean, really, you're slabbing your comics people, never to see the insides again. Who cares what the pages looks like? You're never going to open the book!! Go Dawgs!

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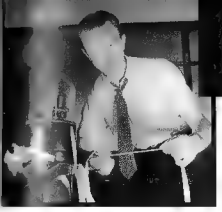
Greetings once again from the Garden State! It's been quite a while since my last market report—my apologies for my busy life! Our shows are still going strong. In fact, dealer and customer attendance have both taken a notable positive upturn in the past half-year or so! Perhaps it's because we run the only monthly "all comics" shows in NJ. I wish we didn't! More shows would mean more exposure for the hobby. But, if it all has to rest on my shoulders, so be it. (Though my back *is* starting to ache a bit.)

The good news is that our area has had a number of new "brick-and-mortar" stores that sell comics open recently, and several have become dealers at the shows. Certain show organizers forbid store owners from promoting their shops at conventions—they won't allow them to create mailing lists from the customers that patronize the tables that those dealers have paid good money for! To say that this is foolish and short-sighted is an understatement. I actively encourage my dealers who are also shopkeepers to promote their stores at their own tables and via flyers at the admission table. Growing the hobby benefits collectors and dealers alike. Having a bat and ball doesn't mean much if you're the only kid on the block and there's nobody else to play with! Best to jump off this soapbox before I



CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action

#220	GD	$36	90%
#239	VG+	$34	45%
#242	VG	$78	28%
#252	GD	$80	56%
#267	VG	$47	49%
#285	VF	$64	63%
#336	NM	$35	54%
#340	NM	$59	79%

Adventure

#204	VG	$35	45%
#214	VG	$47	42%
#227	VG	$35	55%
#251	FN	$25	32%
#278	FN	$21	44%
#283	FN	$39	52%
#286	FN	$29	51%
#291	FN	$25	83%
#293	FN	$30	63%
#300	FN	$125	113%
#331	VF/NM	$27	46%

All Winners

#1	VF [R]	$3000	21%

Amazing Spider-Man

#29	FN+	$95	150%
#59	NM	$80	50%
#78	VF/NM	$74	Guide
#83	NM-	$95	Guide
#114	NM	$80	123%
#117	NM	$80	123%
#119	VF/NM	$78	Guide
#121	VF/NM	$300	157%
#123	VF	$33	Guide
#125	NM	$75	125%
#137	NM-	$80	106%

Avengers

#1	VG	$500	104%
#11	FN	$78	Guide
#71	NM-	$75	107%
#86	NM	$50	125%

Brave and Bold

#1	GD	$220	95%
#5	FN	$100	56%
#9	GD	$54	122%
#10	GD	$45	102%
#21	VG+	$45	64%
#29	GD	$67	39%
#34	VG+	$83	23%
#35	FN	$76	54%
#43	FN	$47	45%
#44	FN+	$76	90%
#51	VG	$40	83%
#62	VF	$43	56%

Daredevil

#1	VG	$430	104%
#2	VF	$405	Guide
#10	VF	$115	105%
#14	VF	$52	80%
#15	VG	$9	50%
#16	VG	$20	83%
#17	VG	$12	50%
#28	VF	$38	Guide
#30	VF	$38	Guide
#67	NM	$30	120%

Flash

#105	GD	$200	48%
#106	GD	$108	76%
#108	FN-	$132	70%
#109	VG	$40	40%
#111	FN+	$213	177%
#119	FN	$81	108%
#129	FN+	$36	41%
#137	VF-	$133	42%
#160	VF+	$71	79%

Hulk

#2	GD	$240	109%
#4	VG	$200	79%
#5	VG	$200	79%
#6	VG+	$340	101%
#102	NM	$280	86%
#102	VF/NM	$247	Guide
#180	NM	$355	221%

Human Torch

#10	GD	$300	104%
#15	VF [R]	$360	33%

Iron Fist

#1	VF/NM	$48	Guide
#14	NM	$245	163%
#14	VF	$75	Guide
#15	VF	$38	Guide

Iron Man

#1	VF+	$503	180%
#11	VF/NM	$48	Guide
#15	VF/NM	$48	Guide

Journey into Mystery

#73	VG-	$52	72%
#84	VG-	$150	68%
#109	VF+	$183	87%
#111	NM-	$158	90%
#112	VF+	$360	155%
#114	VF/NM	$102	58%
#115	VF/NM	$54	31%
#125	NM	$190	108%

Marvel Two-in-One

#1	FN	$20	111%
#1	VF	$15	37%
#2	VF/NM	$11	55%
#3	NM	$14	56%
#3	VF/NM	$11	55%
#4	FN	$8	88%

Marvel Feature

#1	FN	$25	56%
#1	VF/NM	$178	111%
#2	FN	$10	42%
#2	VF	$25	47%
#11	VF/NM	$55	114%

Marvel Mystery

#68	VF [R]	$250	37%
#84	FN [R]	$195	50%

Marvel Premiere

#1	VF+	$25	58%
#3	VF+	$22	59%
#4	VF+	$9	56%
#6	VF	$5	50%
#8	VF	$5	50%
#9	VF/NM	$7	54%
#14	NM-	$5	50%
#16	NM	$16	50%
#17	VF+	$7	58%
#18	VF+	$7	58%

Marvel Spotlight

#1	NM	$52	115%
#5	VF/NM	$275	180%
#9	VF+	$13	59%
#10	VF	$14	64%
#12	VF+	$13	59%
#13	VF	$5	63%
#16	VF	$5	63%

Sgt Fury

#1	VG-	$182	71%
#4	VF+	$137	88%
#5	VF+	$100	64%
#6	VF	$60	64%
#13	VF/NM	$280	75%

Silver Surfer

#1	VF/NM	$501	98%
#2	VF+	$90	63%
#3	NM	$560	238%
#4	VF/NM	$635	141%
#5	NM-	$85	57%
#6	NM	$230	153%
#7	VF+	$57	95%

Strange Tales

#89	GD+	$66	157%
#110	VG	$231	107%
#114	VF	$294	111%
#115	VF-	$155	49%

Strange Tales Annual

#1	VG	$94	98%
#2	VG	$86	68%

Superboy

#3	GD	$125	82%
#72	GD+	$23	164%
#75	FN	$37	88%
#78	FN	$21	32%
#89	GD	$20	71%
#100	FN	$76	133%
#112	VF	$22	48%
#118	VF	$41	89%
#151	NM	$13	33%

Tales of Suspense

#40	GD	$63	50%
#41	VG	$152	108%
#46	VF	$158	75%
#47	VF+	$270	128%
#48	VF+	$520	204%
#49	VF	$389	114%
#50	VF	$153	110%
#51	VF	$290	235%
#57	VF+	$181	108%
#59	VF	$330	157%

get too many splinters.

What's selling? What's hot? When it comes to new books, novice collectors are pretty evenly split between Marvel and DC (with plenty of crossover). Older collectors seem to be turned off by Marvel's return to its early 1990s policy of downing Sequoias to print as many books as they can that all feature the same characters. Sales are strong on the Ultimate titles, *Loki*, *Avengers* and *X-Men* from Marvel. DC's *Identity Crisis* is doing very well (though it does upset some purists). The new *Swamp Thing* run is garnering interest, as well as *Superman/Batman*, *Hellblazer*, *JLA*, *JSA* and—*Green Lantern*!

Slow at the shows as recent back issues (but in some cases hot on the stands): *Superman*—enough printed to fill demand—either brilliant storytelling

or a reallllly bad take on "Memento." *Batman*—biding time till the movie. *Secret Wars*—pretty vacant. *Incredible Hulk*—Bruce Jones is the *best* there is at revitalizing characters (*Ka-Zar the Savage* is *still* brilliant), but it's time to move on. *Amazing Spider-Man* (current series)—"Trouble" alienated a huge number of older readers by implying that Peter Parker's mother and aunt were sluts; reinventing poor dead Gwen as a tramp isn't "cutting edge," it's moronic. Getting more splinters—ouch—on to a sampling of the sales!

Golden Age/Atom Age: *Action* #24 FN+ $800; *Adventure* #103 VG $600; *Adventures of Bob Hope* #2 FN- $200; *Adventures of Rex the Wonder Dog* #46 FN $40; *Blackhawk* #108 VG/FN $85; *Black Cat* #22 VF $100; *Black Magic* #26 VF- $100; *Classics Illustrated* 40 issues (mid-run, mostly 1st prints-*Guide* $425) $100; *Crime Smashers* #14 VG $40; *Detective* #83 VG $100; *Gunfighter* (EC) #10 VG+ $75; *Joe Palooka* #69 VF $50, #71 FN $20; *Komik Pages* #10 (#1) GD $35; *Lucky Star* #1 VF/NM $100; *Modern Love* #7 FN + $175; *New Adventures of Charlie Chan* set #1-6 Avg VG-FN $500 for all; *Real Screen* #21 VG $15; *Red Seal* #22 VG- $40; *Star-Spangled Comics* #2 GD/VG $225; *Supersnipe* Vol 3/#5 GD+ $35; *Terry and the Pirates* #3 (#1) VG/FN $100, #16 FN $40, #26 VG/FN $20; *True Adventures* #3 VF $85; *Wings* #98 FN- $65; *World's Finest* #6 FN $600.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #31 FN $75, #50 FN+ $200; *Batman* #154 VF/NM $88; *Donald Duck* #45 F/VF $45, #46 VF $110, #54 (10¢ version) $150; *Eighty Page Giant* #1 VG $30; *Fantastic Four* #16 FN $60; *Incredible Hulk Special* #1 FN/VF $21; *My Greatest Adventure* #58 VG/FN $15; *Showcase* #46 FN $3 (YES, $3!!!—it sold at one of our no minimum bid auctions!); *Silver Surfer* #4 FN/VF $250, #6 FN $20; *Spectacular Spider-Man* (mag) #2 VF/NM $40; *Superman Annual* #5 VG $20.

Bronze Age: *Avengers* #92 NM- $37; *Captain America* #117 FN/VF $20, VF- $45; *DC 100 Page Super Spectacular* #5 VG $75; *Ghostly Tales* #77 VF $15, #88 VF/NM $16, #97 VF/NM $20; *Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves* #16 VF $10, #18 VF+ $12, #29 VF $10; *Swamp Thing* #1 NM $100; *Wonder Woman* #200 NM $75; *X-Men* #94 VG $48, #101 VF- $50.

Modern: *Avengers* #500 (Directors Cut) NM $8; *Cerebus* #300 NM $25; *Powers* #1 (Image) $25; *Superman/Batman* #8 1st print (multiple NM copies) $6-$8; *Sketch Cover* (multiple NM copies) $8-$10; *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1 ((Kay-Bee) NM $50; *Watchmen* VF/NM Set $60.

This is just a *very* small sampling of the thousands of comics that sell at our shows each month. For a more comprehensive overview, come to a show!

Michael Tierney
Collector's Edition - North Little Rock, Arkansas
The Comic Book Store - Little Rock, Arkansas
Little Rocket Publications

I guess it's appropriate that new comics sales were scary in October. After all, it is the month of Halloween!

September and October are traditionally weak months for me. September is bad because of school starting up and October because of competition with the State Fair over entertainment dollars. Nasty weather trashed the Fair's performance this year, but that didn't help my sales either. While sales were fairly on target for Independents and DC, except for *Batman: War Games*, which was a major bomb, sales for Marvel fell sharply. And I mean sharply. Precipitous doesn't even begin to describe the fall. I've been around a while, coasted through the Black and White bust in the Eighties, and survived the glut of the Nineties. This is the first time since those events that I've seen sales for a publisher fall so fast and so sharply. No explanation as to why it happened. I have heard customers question the quality of Marvel's rapidly expanding title base. But all I do know for certain is that I've got big unsold stacks of Marvels to go along with the unsold *War Games* in Batman and the crossovers. The only line of Marvel performing up to expectations is the Marvel Age line, aimed at younger readers.

Sales on back issues of Marvel don't seem to be hurt, though. Actually, back issue Marvels seemed to heat up while the new comics cooled off: *Amazing Spider-Man* #100 FN+ $59; *Daredevil* #16 (Spider-Man crossover) FN $34, #19 FN $19; *Fantastic Four* #23 VG- $29, #40 VG+ $24; *Incredible Hulk* #182 (3rd Wolverine-cameo) VF- $22; *Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars* #8 (Origin of Black Spider-Man costume) NM $25; *Silver Surfer* #3 (1st Mephisto) FN+ $34; *Uncanny X-Men* #95 VG+ $25, #108 (Byrne art begins) VF $22, #109 FN+ (1st Weapon Alpha/X) FN+ $33, #111 VF $25, #141 VF+ $29, #133 NM $25; *Wolverine* Vol. 1 #2 NM $32; *X-Men* #19 (1st Mimic) FN+ $33, #62 (Kazar) VF- $22.

Greg White
Comic Books and Collectibles
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407-870-0400

Welcome to autumn in Central Florida. Sales have been steady if not spectacular. Silver Age Marvel and DC still lead the way.

The lower-grade books sell well while the more expensive high grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost—most collectors simply cannot afford books in the $500 and up range. As usual we have had to discount certain titles and groups of comics. As I have stated in the past the overall price structure still needs to lower in order to improve across the board sales.

Silver Age 1955-1969. Marvels in the good to fine range moved well this month. *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *Journey into Mystery* and *Tales of Suspense* sold well. We were also able to

purchase a 1960s Marvel collection that included every super hero book from late 1962 to 1969. A mid grade group that will help to fill out our Marvel selection. DC books sell in spurts. One week *Batman* will move, the next week it will be another title. Overall DC sales are decent but a bit behind Marvel this month. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #9 VG $190, #16 NM $400; *Batman* #101 GD $30; *Detective* #231 GD $20; *Fantastic Four* #11 GD $75; *Strange Tales* #110 VG $250; *Tales of Suspense* #42 VG $175.

Golden Age 1935-1955. Kind of quiet this month. We picked up a run of *Batman* #51-100 but that was about it. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more restored books from this period. We really need to address this issue with a price listing and general information in the next *Guide*. Not all books would be listed—let's start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come.

Sales: *Action* #12 GD $350; *Batman* #60 VG $150, #100 FN $500; *Four Color* #62 GD $125; *Prize* #66 VG $22; *Superman* #12 VG $400.

Art, Toys & Disneyana. We bought a large vintage Disney collection this month. Lots of early Disneyland items and 1940s-1950s cartoon and movie pieces. These items have always had a good sales record for us and we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960s TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1966 Aurora Bride of Frankenstein model kit. I also get requests for original art but have had little offered to me in recent months. We are ripe for a quality vintage collection.

Sales: Robin Aurora kit in box $150; Disneyland 1965 guidebook $35; Flintstones cel $50; Captain Action Dr. Evil doll in box $495.

That will wrap up our month. Don't forget—comic books are meant to be read and enjoyed—not to be slabbed and stuck in some bank vault! Have a great month!

John Skoulides/Nick Beckett

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After a hiatus, it's nice to be back reporting what's going on this side of the pond. There's of course the rain, the warm beer and the flea markets that masquerade as conventions, and on top of that, the comic sales. As you're all well aware of the first three, let's concentrate on the last.

Summer and early autumn have seen solid and steady business. No great upsurge in sales due to some impending film or other, but no real fall-off after the summer blockbusters hit the screens either. June and July are traditional holiday months, with people being away, saving for being away, or paying for credit card bills after having been away. This usually dampens down sales, but this year it was little more than a minor glitch. Best sellers remain *Spider-Man* and *X-Men*, but of late *Fantastic Four* has attracted a lot of interest, certainly those issues below #51. Yes, there's a movie on the way, but I honestly believe that this is more collector, rather than speculator, driven. High grade *FF*s in the 20s and 30s are tough to come by (and below #20, damned near impossible) and recent jumps in *Guide* values have finally reflected that. We've had a number of nice high-grade examples come through the door, but few have lasted long. In the space of four weeks, we sold two CGC copies of #24 and one copy of #35, along with beautiful raw copies of #27, #36 (two), #38, #47 and #49. Also appearing more and more frequently on people's wants list are the tough-to-find #45, #49 and #50.

We had a beautiful batch of Marvel Bronze come through the door last month, with comprehensive runs of *Thor*, *Hulk*, *Daredevil* and *Fantastic Four*. These graded out between 9.0 and 9.4/9.6 and lasted about as long as a British summer. Two buyers in particular took about 25 books each in one purchase, and the rest have been moving quickly.

DCs continue to move relatively slowly, but Batman is a winner every time. We've sold through a fair number of 100 page *Detectives* from the early '70s, a lovely CGC VF+ #200, a beautiful VF/NM raw copy of *'Tec* #400 and a VF+ copy of #359. Other DC sales of note include a CGC 9.6 copy of *New Gods* #1, a *House of Secrets* #92 unslabbed in VF/NM and a *Phantom Stranger* #4 also in VF/NM. Surprisingly, what hasn't moved much of late are Adams' *Green Lanterns*. We're currently stocking a number of issues in the VF to VF/NM range, but no interest at the moment.

Regarding CGC books, we have now reached the point where there are more sales of slabbed books than raw, compared to their relative percentages of stock. Roughly, whilst CGC items are only approximately 6% of stock, sales of them are about 10% of item sales. An interesting statistic, which will bear watching over the coming months.

Before I go, a few examples of **sales realized**: *Batman* #228 NM- $75; *Daredevil* #109 NM $21; *Fantastic Four* #24 VF+ (CGC graded) $225; *House Of Secrets* #9 VF/NM $840; *Incredible Hulk* #152 NM- $18; *Marvel Feature* #1 VF+ $175; *New Gods* #1 NM+ (CGC graded) $180; *Uncanny X-Men* #94 VF/NM (CGC graded) $1000.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

Naiman Report

[continued from page 71]

color) label of death, having all that practice on fixing those "damaged" books should ensure that you would not get a "badly" pressed book. You might want to check some of your slabbed books to see what a badly pressed book looks like. What is a badly pressed book?

Will pressing be noted on the label? Only if the Collecting Community demands this. Is there any more independent group than the "comic collecting community"? The only time I have seen the collecting community band together was about five years ago when the AACC circulated a petition to attempt to stop the "un-restoration" of comics without disclosure being made on the label. While on the surface the AACC appeared to stop this practice, my guess is that it has continued to be done for "selective clients" to this very day.

Should a grading service be recommending that customers be doing work to their books? Isn't their job supposed to be as an impartial third party opinion of what the book is, not what it could be. Can anyone say ***Conflict of Interest?***

Could the grading service make the case that "...the majority of collectors don't care about pressing or can even recognize it?" Many just want what the label states!

But let me ask you, do you want the real 9.6 or the pressed into 9.6 book? With no one watching, do you think that a grading company should be working directly with a pressing service?

Shouldn't restoration of any kind (additive or subtractive) be disclosed?

There is also fear in this industry that the service will take it out on the "complainers." Many collectors and dealers are extremely afraid of what any grading service could do to them if they don't go along with this. "I won't get the same grades," "I will be treated differently," "They will ban me," are some of the comments that have been heard.

Dealers, Collectors, Hobbiests, Speculators—what is your spin on this subject? Is pressing restoration? Should it be disclosed? Should grading services recommend that a book be restored if they have a fiduciary interest in charging more for an apparently fixed book?

Since *CBM* doesn't have an online interactive forum, email me at **mnaiman1@cox.net** and let's hear from you. We can get an old fashion interchange of ideas—like the Good Old Days!

Kanigher: Metal Men

[continued from page 25]

than creating one Golem, he manufactured six of them—all more human than robot—and instead of turning to a Kabbalistic book like the *Zohar,* he reached out for Julius Schwartz's copy of *Nostrand's Science Dictionary.*

"All creative moments in comics occurred when a single person had an idea and carried it to its ultimate without thought of anything but sharing what drove him," he once claimed. "You had variety, from Superman to the Metal Men."

But there's another influence: the inventor of the Metal Men was originally inspired by the medieval alchemist, Count Albertus Magnus. Doc Magnus' 13th Century namesake was said to have devised an automaton of metal by combining alchemical and astrological knowledge. This primitive robot, shaped like a young girl, took Count Magnus 30 years to build and possessed the power of speech. Magnus called it his "Android."

It's no coincidence that the Metal Men each bore on his or her brow the symbol of the metal from which it was made, and that these once-mystical signs science had borrowed from ancient astrological lore. But what would you expect from a self-described Gemini like Robert Kanigher?

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the interviewers from whose works this oral history has been constructed, especially to Robin Snyder, Daniel Best, Gary Burkett, Mark Voger, and the late Rich Morrissey.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane	$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	$8
#79	Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Captain Action	$8
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	$8
#84	Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac	$8
#85	Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I	$8
#86	Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II	$8
#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph	$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, George Perez Part II	$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	$8
#91	Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler	$8
#92	Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth	$8
#93	Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone	$8
#94	GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up	$8
#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	$8
#96	Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel	$8
Sp #5	Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8	$12
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	$8
#98	Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin	$8
#99	Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers	$8
#100	Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman	$8
#101	Archie, Butch Guice, CrossGen	$8
#102	Lev Gleason, Russ Heath, Commercial Comics Co.	$8
#103	Disney Comics, Jack Bradbury, Don Rosa	$8
#104	Batman, Neal Adams, Loeb & Lee, Lew Schwartz	$9
#105	Wrightson, Kaluta, Jeffrey Jones, Bruce Jones	$9
#106	Good Girl Art, Rima, Cat Girl, John Celardo	$9
#107	Victor Fox, Aquaman's Paul Norris	$9
#108	End of DC's SA, Geo. Carlson, GA Black Market	$9
#109	GA Villains, Neal Adams Pt. 2, Infantino	$9
#110	Ross, Saunders, Kirby, Wildey, Snyder III	$9
#111	SA Villains, Paul Gulacy, Jim Starlin	$9
#112	Atlas Horror, Alan Class Comics	$9
#113	Nedor, Geo. Pratt, Milt Story, Flying Saucers	$9
#114	Dark Horse Horror, , DC Horror, Robert Tinnell	$9
#115	Barks, Rosa, Eisner, Feldstein, Stanley	$9

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CBM BACK ISSUES
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PO BOX 469
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by Michelle Nolan

This Month it's 1953

For fans of Dennis the Menace, Little Dot and 3-D comics, 1953 was a wonderful year. But if you loved Captain Marvel, Captain Marvel Junior, Dollman or Airboy—among the last heroic survivors of the Golden Age—the year was a disaster.

Otherwise, 1953 was one of the least historic years in the history of comic books, even though the newsstands were flooded with no less than 2,880 issues—an average of 55 new comic books a week!—from more than three dozen publishers.

The classic costume hero was never less in evidence than by the end of 1953, other than DC's Big Three of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, along with a few backup features in the company's anthologies plus Quality's Plastic Man and Blackhawk titles.

Yet only a handful of significant first issues in other genres appeared in 1953, by which time every type of comic book had become well established in the publishers' never-ending search for the profits they enjoyed with super heroes during the height of the Golden Age.

The horror, crime, romance and war genres—which blossomed so quickly in the 1947-50 period—all were well established by 1953, though they were soon destined to run into huge troubles from increasingly vocal critics of comics. Likewise, western, funny animal and teen humor titles had little new to offer in 1953.

That doesn't mean, however, that comic book history wasn't made during that wonderful year.

One of the most commercially important comic books to debut in the entire decade of the 1950s was Standard's licensed *Dennis the Menace* #1 (Aug). This underrated milestone issue hit the stands only two years after Hank Ketcham's newspaper strip first appeared on March 12, 1951 and quickly became hugely popular. Even so, Standard (also known as Pines in the 1950s, formerly Nedor and Better Publications) was typically cautious with *Dennis*, with dates of December 1953 for #2 and March 1954 for #3 before embarking on a bi-monthly schedule.

Dennis the Menace, much like *Uncle Scrooge*, was among the few titles that could be read and enjoyed just as much by adults as by elementary school kids. I'll wager more than a few parents read their children's issues of *Dennis* and laughed even harder than their kids! Dennis the Menace, of course, became one of the best-selling comic book characters from the 1950s through the 1970s, and seems just as fresh today in the newspapers as it was five decades ago.

Harvey's *Little Dot*, one of the most important original comic book creations of the 1950s, first appeared in her own title with #1 in September 1953. That ever-so-scarce issue is far more important to many collectors than *Dennis the Menace* #1, though, because *Little Dot* #1 also includes the debuts of Richie Rich and Little Lotta, both also created exclusively for comic books. Richie Rich, of course, rivals Archie for spin-off-title success.

Little Dot was popular for more than 20 years and is fondly remembered by legions of female Baby Boomers. I've seen 40-something women pick up an issue of *Little Dot* at major comic book conventions and break into huge grins, savoring memories of one of the most original of all kid characters. Who could forget all those sight gags with dots?

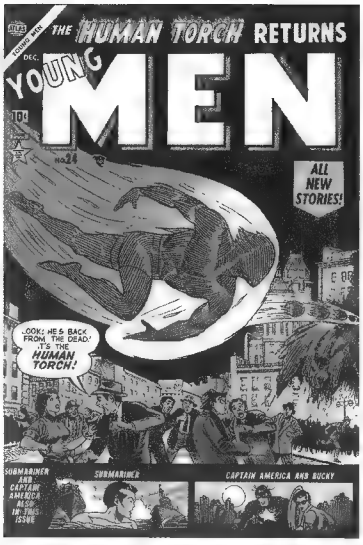
There was another humor milestone: Warner Brothers cartoon standouts Tweety & Sylvester also earned their first issue with Dell *Four Color* #489 (Aug) and became a reliable, if unspectacular, title for Dell and Gold Key for years. The cat and the canary are two of my personal favorites, both in the comics and on the screen, but I haven't met too many others who love them as much as I do.

As far as first issues go, pretty much the only other noteworthy debuts in 1953 were the Archie Series annuals featuring Betty & Veronica and Jughead in the wake of the success of the Archie Annuals, which first appeared three years earlier.

Only two significant publishers left the scene in 1953, though many more were to follow in the next five years.

Hillman, by 1953 a leading producer of magazines, digests and paperbacks, produced 26 issues in 1953 before abandoning the comic book business about halfway through the year. But no really significant company left the industry that year until the demise of Fawcett, which produced five final comics dated January 1954, including *Marvel Family* #89. Those issues were, of course, on the stands several months earlier, so Fawcett must be considered the only truly important firm to leave the comics scene in 1953.

One of the joys of 1953, though, was the variety of comics still to be found on the stands. Even the giants of the industry—Atlas/Marvel (370 issues), Dell (351) and DC (303)—still produced


THE HUMAN TORCH RETURNS
YOUNG MEN
ALL NEW STORIES!
LOOK! HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD! IT'S THE HUMAN TORCH!
SUBMARINER AND CAPTAIN AMERICA ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
SUBMARINER
CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY

only a little more than one-third of all newsstand comics combined. Only three years later, those three companies produced nearly 60 percent (1,185 issues) of the 2,054 comics produced with 1956 dates. Yet in 1953, no fewer than 23 other companies published at least 30 issues. The industry would never see such variety again until the emergence of the independents and non-corporate titles of the 1980s.

There were six noteworthy last issues in 1953 starring costume heroes with deep Golden Age roots, with four from Fawcett—*Captain Marvel* #150 (Nov), *Whiz* #155 (Jun), *Captain Marvel Junior* #119 (Jun) and *Master* #133 (Apr). Fawcett gradually phased out its entire comic book line in 1953, so one can only wonder what the readers must have thought, seeing one longtime favorite after another disappear.

Airboy vanished into the wild blue yonder with #111 (Vol. 10, #4), dated May, and *Dollman* disappeared with #47, dated October. In some ways, it's odd that those titles survived as long as they did—perhaps because they both carried entertaining stories and art right up to the end. Dollman also enjoyed a 10-year run in *Feature Comics* #27-139 through 1949. Both features may have been considered too fanciful by 1953, since neither was based in anything even approaching reality.

Three iconic heroes did make brief comebacks. I can well remember how astonished a few Marvel fans were in the 1960s to discover that Captain America, Human Torch and Sub-Mariner had all made short comebacks in Atlas titles of the mid-1950s, beginning with *Young Men* #24 (Dec 1953), which featured the return of all three Timely/Marvel stalwarts. Alas, Cap and the Torch were gone in less than a year and Subbie lasted only two years.

Young Men #24 is doubtless the most in-demand comic book published in 1953. My bet is that if you had a dozen issues of *Young Men* #24 to offer at a comics convention, and your price was reasonable—say $300 for good, $900 for fine—you could sell them faster than any other 1953 title.

The only exception might be the much scarcer *Daring Love* #1 (Sep-Oct 1953) from tiny Gilmor Publications. That issue, of course, features Steve Ditko's first published artwork along with an infamous "let's-roll-in-the-hay" cover by a different artist. *Daring Love* became *Radiant Love* with #2—though Ditko never again worked in a minor-league love comic—even though another 1953 *Daring Love* title, this one from Ribage, ceased publication after the March issue.

In one of the most historic notes of 1953, three long-running Fiction House comics last hit the stands that year—*Jumbo* #167 (Apr), *Fight* #86 (Summer) and *Planet* #73 (Winter). *Jumbo* #167 featured the last Golden Age appearance of Sheena, the first and best of the jungle girls. Sheena ran in all 167 issues of *Jumbo* over 15 years—the longest-running Golden Age heroine by the time she threw her last spear.

Oddly, a couple of years later, she popped up in a 26-episode syndicated television show, starring Irish McCalla, in what may be the only example of a cancelled comic book series being filmed for television. It also may be one of the few supposed "kiddie" adventure shows that may have had more fans among fathers than youngsters, thanks to the statuesque McCalla.

DC gave up its ghosts in 1953 with *Sensation Mystery* #116 (Jul-Aug) and *Phantom Stranger* #6 (Jun-Jul), though the company retained an ever-tamer version of *House of Mystery*, which was never too wild to begin with. Other than companies that didn't publish horror comics, such as Dell and Archie, DC was the first to feel the pressures of criticism over horror themes.

The 3-D comic craze, which affected most companies, thankfully lasted only a few months in 1953. Virtually all the few dozen 3-D titles were off the stands by the end of the year. I had no use at all for 3D comics, and still don't! I remember how frustrating it was to find a second-hand 3-D issue—with or without the glasses, but especially without. One of my first movie memories, though, is an especially vivid one, recalling how I saw the wonderful John Wayne western *Hondo* in 3-D when I was five years old. I still remember feeling like a well-

thrown oil lamp was going to hit me.

Of course, one of the best things about comics in 1953 was that EC was in its full glory, with a wide range of titles covering its record 61 issues released with 1953 dates. But if you weren't aware of that, you probably wouldn't be reading this in the first place! Let's just say that any year that EC's titles flourished was a wonderful year!

Book Review

by Paul Gravett

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TALES TO ASTONISH: JACK KIRBY, STAN LEE, AND THE AMERICAN COMIC BOOK REVOLUTION
Ronin Ro
(Bloomsbury, New York, London)
$24.95 hardback
ISBN 1-58234-345-4

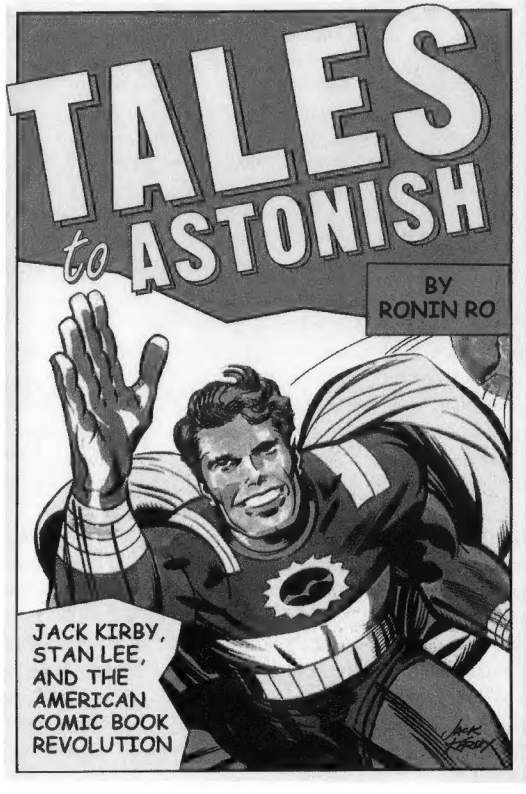
"Kirbyology" is my invented word for "the study of the life and works of Jack Kirby." Though it's not yet become a degree subject or entered the dictionary, the field of Kirbyology has greatly expanded during the decade since his death in 1994. It's very different to the scarcity of information twenty or more years ago.

Back then I was a youngster living in England. In 1971 I ordered my first "textbook" on the subject from an advert I had spotted in Kirby's *Fourth World* comics for DC. It was a bit of a gamble mailing dollars as cash payment across the Atlantic, and then there was the long, expectant wait for it to arrive. My school friend and collecting buddy Alan Gaulton never forgot how I ran out of the house and down the street to meet him, holding the large illustrated envelope and shouting excitedly "It's come! It's come!"

The two of us spent the rest of that afternoon and evening poring over every rare image and first sight of Kirby's uninked pencils, and memorizing every nugget of biographical information about him. The oversized portfolio *Kirby Unleashed* was a revelation to me, not only into his career and techniques but more broadly into the fascinating secrets behind the comics I loved. It made me realize there was so much more to discover behind the panels. As a footnote, TwoMorrows (**www.twomorrows.com**) has re-released *Kirby Unleashed*, remastered, updated and expanded.

TwoMorrows publisher John Morrow deserves huge credit for maintaining high standards and unearthing rarities since September 1994 in his magazine *Jack Kirby Collector*, now in the same large, luxurious format as *Unleashed*. But let's not forget other pioneer Kirbyologists, such as Greg Theakston, who started his two volumes of *The Jack Kirby Treasury* in 1982 and continues today as *Pure Imagination*, or Ray Wyman, who compiled the most handsomely produced monograph so far, *The Art of Jack Kirby*, in 1992. At least Kirby was alive to see these books and the high level of regard he was held in.

For several years now, the comics writer, historian and former close assistant to Kirby, Mark Evanier has been writing the most exhaustive, not to say exhausting, biography of Kirby. To tide us over until that much-anticipated tome arrives, I would recommend Ronin Ro's new book *Tales to Astonish: Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, and The American Comic Book Revolution.* Writing in a breezy novelistic style, Ronin (named after Frank Miller's comic) brings the personalities and behind-the-scenes power plays vividly to life. Michael Chabon won a Pulitzer prize for his novel *The Adventures of Cavalier and Clay*, a fictionalized account of comic book history, partly inspired by Kirby's life and dedicated to him. Ronin Ro's rigorously factual account proves that the truth can indeed be stranger and maybe even stronger than fiction. In nearly 300 pages, his compelling docudrama charts Kirby's life story and how it interweaves with those of his two great partners Joe Simon and Stan Lee, and the business deals and disasters, the lawsuits and grudges, and those periods of soaring flights of four-color imagination. He shows a genuine sense of sympathy with Kirby's desire to better himself, perhaps reflecting Ronin's own troubled childhood in the South



Bronx.

I am impressed that Ronin went straight to his sources and conducted new interviews, up to five a day, with as many of the principals caught up in this history as he could and with many of Kirby's closest associates. His first-hand research helps to provide some rich atmosphere and telling anecdotes to this book. In one case, Joe Simon remembers Kirby's surprise when he first met him: "He'd never seen a comic book artist with a suit before." Both Jack and Joe's fathers were tailors, but Jack's only made pants. In fact, Stan Lee's father was a dress cutter and even Lee himself worked for a time in a shop that made and sold trousers. Among the many details I enjoyed discovering are: the inspiration behind *The Vision* emerging out of clouds of smoke coming from Simon and Kirby's shared passion for cigars; the Kirby family's railroad-style apartment, with all the rooms lined up in a row; Kirby seeking Jerry Siegel's blessing to create his version of Superman in Jimmy Olsen; and, after all the disputes over who created what, Lee recalling Kirby's private words to him as they hugged each other at the 1993 San Diego Comic Convention, "You have nothing to reproach yourself about, Stan."

Ronin does not avoid the thorny question of who should receive creative credit for Marvel's phenomenal burst of concepts starting with the Fantastic Four in 1961. While this greatly contributed to the gradual breakdown of the Lee-Kirby relationship, it didn't help that Stan started enjoying the lion's share of the media attention, while in one newspaper report Jack is insultingly described as resembling "the assistant foreman in a girdle factory." It only worsened when Lee began to take charge of characters like the Silver Surfer and steer them away from Kirby's intentions. Ronin has also smartly gone back to those Stan Lee's Soapbox columns, the "official" cheerful voice of Marvel on the Bullpen Bulletins page, and quotes them to contrast the public hype with the private discontent of several artists at Lee's self-aggrandizing and publisher Martin Goodman's broken promises. Still today, despite fan petitions and Lee's praise for his partner, Kirby receives no credit for his role in creating so many of Marvel's characters.

Among the nuggets of information I picked up from this book is the fact that, before leaving Marvel for DC in 1970, Jack had tried to offer his new characters, those that would become the New Gods, Forever People and Mister Miracle, to Stan Lee, but he turned him down. Roy Thomas is quoted as saying, "[Lee] preferred to have Jack just keep doing what he was doing," namely the Fantastic Four and Thor. Nor had I heard before that in the early Eighties while Kirby was working with Steve Gerber on *Destroyer Duck*, Marvel had planned to publish a "History of Marvel" in comic book form that would have shown likenesses of Kirby, Lee, Ditko and others "acting out the company's official version of events (Stan as sole creator telling them what to draw)." Kirby's lawyers soon put a stop to that effort to rewrite the past.

An important work of Kirbyology, this book helps us get a perspective and look across Kirby's hardworking life, seated day-after-day in his stiff-backed dining chair at his worn little table (now a museum piece kept for the nation by the Smithsonian), writing, drawing and creating to provide for his wife, children and grandchildren. In the end, despite his remarkable achievements, I can't help feeling slightly saddened that he had to struggle so much for proper reward and recognition, and that so many of his ambitions for comics were thwarted or only partly realized—for example, his vision of overseeing a whole Fourth World line of his own characters, or his faith that the future lay in adult graphic novels. Ronin quotes Mike Thibodeaux's toast after Kirby's funeral, which expresses this well:

"[Kirby] said he never wanted to do piecework in his life; he didn't want to end up like his dad. Yet, if you think about it, he ended up doing piecework. Even though he didn't work in the sweatshop, he still ended up working, just turning out page after page after page, for a salary.... But if he didn't turn the pages out, he didn't get the salary. I don't know if he ever really achieved the level that he was hoping he would, where the work would generate an income without his having to sit at a table and draw."

My only misgivings with this book are that it would have helped to give each chapter a title, something to indicate its subject and development, and an index would have been very useful. One minor disappointment is that there are no illustrations inside, perhaps because of the costs or difficulties of copyright permissions. Even so, a section of photos would have been welcome, I feel. Still, for Kirby's artwork you can always return to the comics themselves of course, choosing from the original collectors' items classics and the growing library of affordable reprints. And for the most eye-popping celebration of Kirby's unfettered genius at Marvel Comics, no other book comes close to Arlen Schumer's glorious art book *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* (Chronicle Books), in which he devotes no fewer than 32 pages, quite rightly the largest section, to the King's Sixties' masterworks. Also recommended is the Kirby volume of Fantagraphics' *Comics Journal Library*, compiling some of his best interviews.

After reading *Tales to Astonish*, Kirby's life seems to me to have been one of tantalizing yet unrealized possibilities: What if Kirby had been able to stay at DC in the late Fifties, so that his Challengers of the Unknown became DC's Fantastic Four? What if Kirby had left Marvel with Steve Ditko and they had set up their own company? What if Kirby had been able to introduce his Fourth World series at Marvel in 1970? What if DC had allowed him to enlarge the Fourth World line of books, bringing in other artists to draw Lightray, Lonar, Infinity Man, and freeing him to develop graphic novels of his own? And how might his life and comic book history have changed if Jack had taken up the offers to become Marvel's Art Director, or even DC's Publisher? All of these "Elseworlds" could have happened, but Kirby's real life as chronicled by Ronin Ro is remarkable enough in itself. His is truly a "Tale to Astonish."

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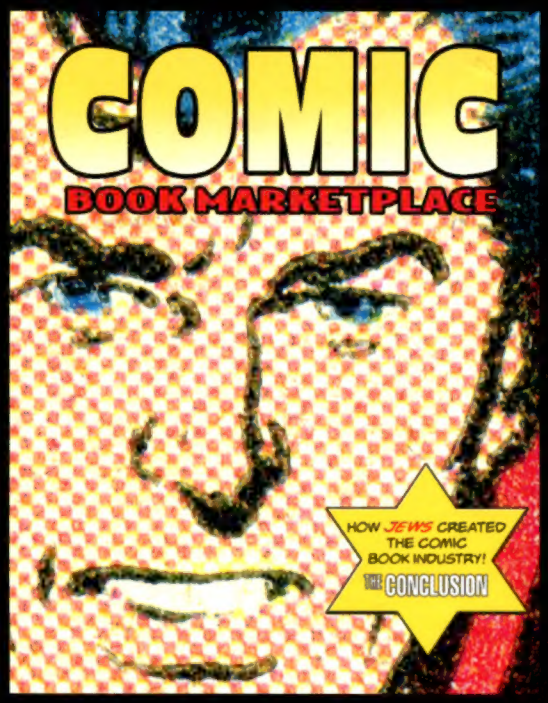
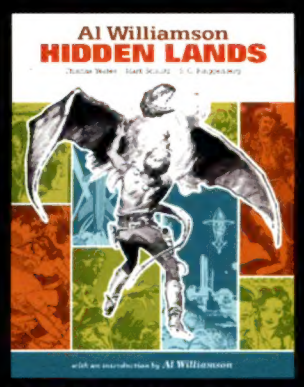
COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #118



In *Comic Book Marketplace* #118 we conclude our three-part series on the Jewish origins of comic books. We'll take a look at Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Joe Kubert's *Yossel* and Will Eisner's *Fagin the Jew*. And, as always, our regular columnists will surprise and delight you with their comics lore.

The third part of Arie Kaplan's "How Jews Created the Comic Book Industry." examines the Bronze and Modern Age. Focusing on the medium's expansion into graphic novels, such as the award winning *Maus* by Art Spiegelman.

Will Murray examines Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg*.

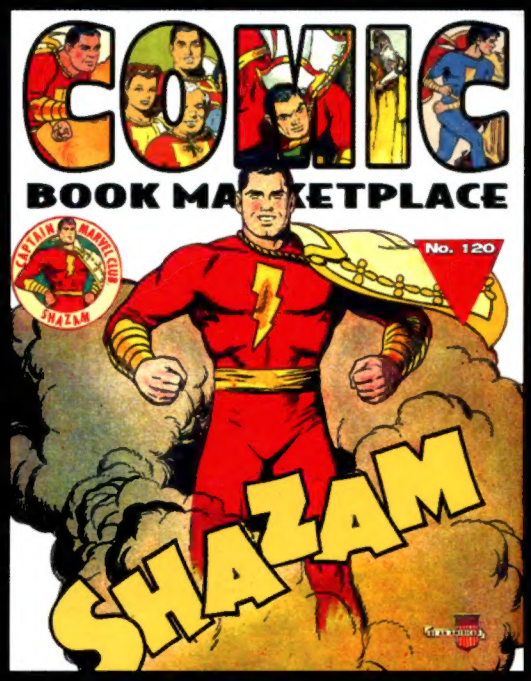


Thomas Yeates on the beauty and brilliance of Al Williamson.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #119

Comic Book Marketplace #119 examines the crossovers between network radio shows and comic books. Also this issue, the second part of our examination of illustration great Norman Saunders.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #120



Comic Book Marketplace #120: Captain Marvel was created by C.C. Beck, right? No, it was Roscoe Fawcett, right? No, it was Al Allard or Ralph Daigh, right? No, it was Bill Parker, right? And what did Fred MacMurray have to do with it? And Pete Costanza? The correct answer is…all of the above played a role in creating the Big Red Cheese, the 'World's Mightiest Mortal,' and our Will Murray will explain in a new major article about the rise and fall of Captain Marvel.